1ST-YEAR COLLEGE ENGLISH INTENSIVE FOR MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS



Kelly Kadi
Diablo Valley College

LibreTexts™

Kadi: 1st-year College English Intensive for Multilingual Students

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Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

1: Introduction - Why Study Argument?

Introduction

What is college about if not about ideas? How do we respond to others' ideas and form our own?

I am an engaged citizen, a partner, a writer, and a mother who feels good about many decisions I've made in my life, but I often don't have my own ideas clear. Sometimes I feel a little despairing about how much I'm unsure of. I listen to the news or I read the voter booklet or I mull over a disagreement between colleagues and a million questions come into my head.

At other times I have a strong sense of my opinion but a hard time explaining it. When I try to write, I struggle. Every time, I hope that for once writing will come easy, and every time, I end up frustrated. I have to remind myself that I have been through this struggle many times before and that certain practices help. If I stick with the process, both my ideas and my writing get clearer. And I feel satisfaction in that increasing clarity. The aha moments bring relief and some sense of wonder.

In college, we are faced with so much pressure to perform and figure out our futures. It's easy to forget that academia also ensures that we are not alone. We don't have to do our thinking or our writing in isolation; it wouldn't make sense to try. Thinking and writing happen in conversation, in relationship. On almost any given topic, there is a rich, contentious community of ideas out there, ideas that build on and often contradict each other. We could start from scratch, but why? We contribute more if we find a way to enter the conversation.

This book is meant as a practical guide to help students join that conversation. Joining it means moving through a series of steps, from understanding and describing others' arguments, to deciding whether or to what extent we agree, to articulating our own points in response. These steps match up with the following typical college writing assignments:

- Summaries describe the ideas in an argument we have read.
- Assessments offer a judgment on how strong the argument is.
- Response papers make recommendations in response to the strengths or weaknesses of the argument.
- Research-based arguments describe and assess multiple sources in order to arrive at a new perspective.

The following chapters on argument follow what you have already learned about the skills of critical reading and writing for college-level assignments. In addition to preparing students to enter the academic conversation, these chapters aim to teach student writers how to write well and get ideas across clearly and succinctly to their readers. After all, the goal of writing is to share ideas that you consider important and meaningful with an audience of readers that can fully understand the points you are trying to make.

As writers, we all have to feel at times that we are struggling in the dark. My hope is that these chapters and assignments offer skill-building tasks and practical advise that will help students find their way. I hope it helps you all gain confidence about putting your own opinions into the academic conversation.

Introduction to Argument Assignment

Ted Talk Video Details: "Why You Think You're Right -- Even If You're Wrong"

Perspective is everything, especially when it comes to examining your beliefs. Are you a soldier, prone to defending your viewpoint at all costs — or a scout, spurred by curiosity? Julia Galef examines the motivations behind these two mindsets and how they shape the way we interpret information, interweaved with a compelling history lesson from 19th-century France. When your steadfast opinions are tested, Galef asks: "What do you most yearn for? Do you yearn to defend your own beliefs or do you yearn to see the world as clearly as you possibly can?"

For Your Discussion Post

Watch the Ted Talk video titled 'Why You Think You're Right--Even If You're Wrong," and respond with one complete paragraph that explains your mindset: **Do you think you generally have the soldier mindset for argument or the scout mindset for argument?** Provide specific examples from your life experience to support your main idea.

-Make sure that you RESPOND and do not simply summarize or paraphrase the author's ideas. When an assignment asks you to respond, you must do MORE than explain what the author has said. You need to add to the topic by including perspectives, opinions, thoughts, or experiences of your own. Don't forget to include the title and author/speaker of any source you reference.

-Work on your paragraph structure for college-level writing and be sure to start with a clear idea; support it with additional details, examples, or information gathered from your resource search; and end with another strong point.

-Don't forget to include the title and author/speaker of any source you reference. And use MLA title case for capitalization. The title should be punctuated and capitalized just like this: "Why You Think You're Right--Even If You're Wrong"

-Be sure to edit your writing carefully before submitting because your classmates will see your work and use it as an example response!

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Argument Assignments

2.1: Practice Assignment 1
2.2: Practice Assignment 2
2.3: Researched Argument Essay
2.4: Academic Research Essay

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2.1: Practice Assignment 1

Assignment Introduction

This assignment requires you to complete the writing process from critical reading and idea collection to outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. This assignment should help you set goals for improvement that you will reach throughout this semester. It will also help you practice the complete essay-writing process that will be an important part of college success in your future semesters.

The Writing Process

In an assignment that requires response-writing, you will be writing your own ideas, opinions, and connections to the topic of the text you read.

The steps for completing a response paper are:

- **Read the assigned text for an initial understanding: pay attention to the author's main points and your thoughts about them**
- **Record your thoughts and impressions in notes: take notes that will help you summarize these points in your essay. Take note of some of your thoughts, opinions, and connections to the text as you read.**
- **Develop a collection of thoughts and insights from the article, your notes, and your own life experience**
- **Write an outline to organize your thoughts and choose a main idea for your response**
- **Construct your first essay draft: this can be messy and have many complicated ideas. Don't worry about it. Relax and just get something down on paper so you can begin to fix it up. This is what Lammot calls the "shitty first draft." Don't procrastinate--just write something!**
- **Edit and revise your work carefully to fix errors and check for clear understanding: Be sure that all your ideas support your main point, you have explained your ideas clearly, and you have provided support and/or examples for each one. Edit your sentences and words, and proofread for accuracy and correctness.**

Once you have established an outline for your paper, you'll need to make sure that your ideas respond to the topic using the basic elements of every strong essay, a strong thesis statement that explains YOUR main idea about the topic.

In the case of a response paper, the first sentence will likely contain the title and topic of the reading to which you are responding, and the name of the author.

The last sentence of your introductory paragraph should contain your stance or position on the subject you are writing about--this is your thesis.

There's no need to feel shy about expressing your own opinion in a response, even though it may seem strange to write "I feel" or "I believe" in a formal essay, it's okay in this type of writing. However, be careful not to overuse these words or any other unnecessary phrases; your writing can become cluttered and your points weakened.

Essay Assignment PROMPT & DIRECTIONS

Argument Topic: Why do relatively few women work in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

Assigned Reading: "Why Do Women Shun STEM? It's Complicated."

Writing Prompt: Write a summary-and-response essay of 700-900 words (approximately 3 pages: double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt., left-aligned text that reveals your own ideas, opinions, critiques or connections as a response to the argument written by Barbara Oakley.

Keep in mind that her essay, which first appeared in a 2018 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* is also a summary & response essay. Oakley's essay responds a persuasive essay titled "Why Women Don't Code," (Links to an external site.) by Stuart Reges. In it, he claims that women are underrepresented in computer science because of personal preference, not because institutional barriers deter them from pursuing careers in tech. Many people reacted to his article and opinion with outrage and the knowledge that while some of his ideas may explain a part of what's happening with women considering STEM education, it mostly ignores the main problems that can be addressed to bring more women into the STEM field and it largely over simplifies the situation. You may include references to Reges's text or other articles you've across if you want to, but it is not required for this assignment.

Your job for this essay is to respond to Barbara Oakley's article. Please include the title, author, and main idea near the beginning of your essay. You will use some of the summary skills you've practiced to explain Oakley's key ideas and respond to them. Please do NOT think of a summary/response essay as "half an essay of summary, then half an essay of response." Instead, integrate your skills of summary and response, using summary as needed to refer to the text, and response as needed to contribute your own ideas, opinions, and/or examples.

Please join this significant conversation that questions why there are not many women in STEM careers and how we might encourage more female students to pursue those careers.

The Grading of a Practice Assignment

What goals/skills should I focus on in order to do my best? Your goal is to show your current ability in the following areas that are considered entry-level skills for basic essay writing.

1. Understand the reading assignment and explain the author's ideas briefly and clearly as you reference the text in your essay.
2. Follow the prompt directions. Keep all your ideas tied to the general topic introduced in the reading. *If you don't understand the prompt question in class, ask questions!
3. Follow the basic American-essay guidelines of organizing sentences into logical paragraphs, and paragraphs into an essay. Try to write a clear intro, body, and conclusion (beginning, middle, and end structure).
4. Reveal your skill in critical thinking and your ability to clearly express an idea of your own. Add something of your own to the conversation topic.
5. Include a clear thesis statement that builds on or challenges the ideas of the text. Then offer effective explanation and support for your ideas.
6. Edit and revise with enough accuracy that all ideas are clear and easy for readers to follow. Any errors should not distract from your main point or make your sentences unreadable.

If any part of the above criteria feels new to you, don't worry. Your instructor will assess your skills, look for the positive in your work, and then help you by providing the best guidance and support to move your education forward and get your writing skills to the next level!

If you get a score of "Not Yet," you will need to edit and revise:

Revising your paper is not skimming a paper while watching TV. Revising is focusing on many elements in your draft. While you should edit for sentence-level and grammatical errors while you revise, editing is only a small part of what needs to be accomplished in a revision. You should revise your paper several times before turning it in for a deadline. To revise for a final submission, you may need to completely over-haul your essay to prove that you deserve a better score than you got on a previous draft. Show that you have really become a better writer. If all you do is fix a few grammatical errors, it will likely not result in a significant grade increase, and if your essay still contains other major concerns, you might not receive an improved grade. Learning how to improve your writing through a thorough revision process will not only increase your essay score, but will make you a better writer, which will benefit you in upcoming writing assignments and far beyond the end of this course. Here is a partial list of things to consider while revising an essay.

Refer to the grading rubric. How do you think your essay measures up? What could be changed to improve your rubric score? If you already have feedback from the professor, read it carefully and address ALL of the concerns. If you need to do more studying to address the concerns please try the Purdue OWL website, your recommended text books, and your class notes.

Once you write a complete draft of your essay, you revise it--adding material, deleting material, and making corrections. You then continue the revision process by revising your paper again...and then again. Have several other people (trusted peers AND tutors from DVC) read and discuss your essay with you. They cannot make changes for you or tell you what to write, but they can discuss elements of your paper that are not clear, disconnected, or need more work. Fresh eyes and an outsider's perspective will do wonders for your writing!

You will need to submit it to Canvas before the revision deadline which will be approximately one-week after you receive your score. Be careful to submit to the correct assignment or it will not get scored! You can still earn a "Pass" for the essay by showing that you have developed skills with the required writing criteria.

Most importantly, don't lose confidence in your ability to work hard and continue learning. The more essays you write (and re-write/revise) the more your skills will be developed and refined. This is a learning opportunity for you and a chance for you to complete your work at an elevated level!

If you get a score of "Pass," you will not need to edit and revise:

This means your writing demonstrated the skills for basic essay writing at a satisfactory level for the assignment. Unless otherwise noted in the assignment directions, this will be determined by the ENGL-122 writing rubric. Students whose writing matches the "meets expectations" or "exceeds expectations" criteria will receive a grade of 100%. You you will be asked to reflect on what you did well for this assignment and what your goals are for improvement. You will need to then apply your new knowledge and goals to your future writing. It means you are ready to move on to the next writing task in this course. Please continue to develop additional writing skills and advance your writing with deeper ideas. The writing assignments in this class will continue to get more advanced and more challenging!

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2.2: Practice Assignment 2

Assignment Introduction

This essay is more challenging than the argument summary & response you were assigned for essay 1 (the assignments continue to build in difficulty throughout the term). This time you must write a specific type of argument essay: an argument of definition. While it will take some hard work and deep thinking, I know you can do it!

Please ask questions and send me drafts of thesis statements or essay ideas when you want some feedback!

With arguments of definition, student writers practice the skills required to think critically about people, places, and things in the world and the definitions or categories we unthinkingly ascribe to them.

Commonly accepted definitions are often inadequate and based on uncritical acceptance of formal dictionary definitions or operational definitions.

There are many reasons why it may be critically important to change or clarify the meaning, explanation, or usage of a term:

1. **Society can outgrow a definition as technology and culture change the word in which we live** (for instance we've had to adapt new meanings for "Google" and "Zoom," and even the way we are using the words "quarantine," "global pandemic," and "social-distancing" have changed very recently and require new modern definitions).
2. **Definitions can be harmful to people** (as in the case of stereotypes or racial slurs that hurt people and require modifications to be more politically and socially correct--the controversial term "Hispanic," the changing terms "American Indian" and "queer," and the creation of the gender-neutral term "LatinX" and pronouns "ze" and "zir" come to mind)
3. **Without change, definitions can outlive their use** (the idea "primetime" has become obsolete in the age of internet broadcasting on demand--and the meaning of "racist" has had to grow and evolve to keep up with the changes of the times)
4. **Definitions can mislead** (as when "intellectual property" is given the same rights as real property; when corporations are given the status of "individuals" without being beholden to the assumption that individuals have ethical obligations.)

Essay Assignment PROMPT & DIRECTIONS

Writing Prompt: Write an essay of 700-900 words (approximately 3 pages double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt.) in which you make an argument that gives a word or phrase a clear and original meaning, significance, and/or explanation.

Your main argument could re-define and re-explain a term in one of several way. For instance, your argument may follow one of the following three patterns:

1. Reveal a new formal definition for a word or phrase
   - The best definition of X is . . . and the common definition of X is faulty/limited/lacking/incorrect/outdated/etc because . . .
2. Explain what you believe to be a better category or usage of a word or phrase
   - X must satisfy Y requirements in order to be considered useful/safe/effective/correct/etc
3. Move a word or term from one general category of meaning to a new category
   - X is in category Y or X is defined by a), b), and c).
   - X should be used only in specific situations such as . . . because . . . Used incorrectly, X can be a harmful term because . . .

Your Topic: You will select a topic that is interesting to you. Consider questioning loaded words that you see frequently in modern media and the world around you. Consider selecting a term that may have an embedded bias or hidden opinion when used in articles. Avoid poor topics such as ones that are too extensive, religious, too simple to require a definition essay, or aren't arguable.

Your Examples: Use well-researched, real-world examples to show your reader what you mean and to help you support either a formal or operational argument of definition. Introduce title, author, and main idea for every source you integrate into your essay.

Your Structure: The number of paragraphs is up to you and depends on the way you need to break down your main idea and make it more manageable to explain in body paragraphs. Make sure you have a clearly organized essay with an intro, body, and conclusion. Your thesis statement needs to appear at the end of your introduction.

Your Rhetoric: Establish authority by demonstrating personal connection and/or effective research on your topic. Use strong persuasive wording and developed strategies of logos, pathos, and ethos. Avoid fallacies, problematic arguments, and unnecessary detail or wordiness.

Your Editing: Make sure you have complete sentences and correct punctuation and capitalization. Format your essay according to MLA guidelines.

The Writing Process for This **Assignment**

1. Conduct some research in order to explore topics that hold your interest:

- Begin by questioning the definition of a few significant terms that appear frequently in the modern media you consume
- Complete some internet research on where, when, how, and why the words are regularly used. What do they usually mean and what else do they imply to readers? In what ways can you more clearly explain the terms and offer some additional meaning?
- Consider questioning the loaded words that are frequently used in news media to explain situations with an embedded bias or hidden opinion.
    1. Why are some writers using the word "rioters" and some using the word "protesters"?
    2. Why does the word "terrorist" or "terrorism" appear in some articles and not in the articles that take an opposing view of the same situations?
    3. Is it even possible for a philosophy such as "anti-fascism" to be categorized as a "terrorist organization," as it has been called by Trump recently?
    4. See the previous page: "Learn to Write an Argument of Definition" for additional ideas
    5. Search The Perspective website to see two opposing perspectives of current events and ongoing local and word debates
- Avoid poor topics: topics that are too extensive or aren't arguable
    1. questions that can be answered by looking at a dictionary or other reference make poor topics. Your point needs to be modern, significant, and arguable. Your ideas and persuasive essay should be important for society to read because there will be some people who disagree with your ideas and require a careful explanation.
    2. papers about the definition of love or friendship tend to be weak because people are used to thinking of their characteristics a matter of personal rather than public preference. Discover a topic more significant to what's going on in the world and join a critical, modern conversation.
    3. Avoid topics that can't be supported with real-world examples or that rely on religious ideology.
        - For example, while "abortion is murder" is a definition argument, it's not a good topic for a college essay. You can't address the definition of life and the definition of murder in such a short essay and you are likely to run into problems with logical fallacies and "bad arguments" with such a topic." Stay away from these clichéd topics. Stick with arguments that people are likely to disagree about or have never thought of but still can be persuaded by.
    4. Avoid defining something only as "good" or "bad." That is an evaluation argument and not necessarily a definition argument. Whether the category is good or bad can be what's at stake, but it shouldn't be the only argument.
        - For example: "sweatshop labor is bad" is a poor topic, but "sweatshop labor is slavery" is a better topic choice. Whether you define sweatshop labor as slavery or not will certainly matter. People already feel that is bad, so if you can convince people that sweatshop labor is slavery, you've won your definition argument and people will hopefully disapprove of sweatshop labor as they disapprove of slavery.

2. Conduct additional research to build your ideas and make a final topic selection:

- Discover the currently accepted characteristics or definition of the terms and categories you are exploring
    1. Explore accepted dictionary definitions
    2. Explore people's assumptions about the definitions—ask your friends and family members their definition. Are the definitions the same as yours or each others'?
    3. Look in books about the topic to see how people are using the word or category
- Identify what's missing from the definitions
    1. What does the accepted definition exclude?
    2. Use logic and evidence to consider why what is excluded should be included.
        - Example: Cheerleading isn't often thought of as a sport,but similar activities such as rhythm gymnastics have Olympic events, so cheerleading should be considered a sport.
    3. Consider evidence:
        - Will you be able to find more examples that support your ideas?
        - Can you find some use examples that show what you consider to be lacking in the current definition and usage and more examples that demonstrate a better usage or meaning?
        - If you are making a comparison of two terms, can you explain and provide examples for both terms?

3. Create an argument with a new definition, category, or explanation of the word or term you chose:

- Identify the ways in which the accepted definition or category ascribed to a term is lacking or doesn't hold up to critical inquiry.
- Identify what's at stake. Why should people care about the definition at all? What are the consequences of people's misunderstanding?
-
- Identify modifications to the definition that will help the readers define or categorize the term in a way that is more useful.
- Write a working thesis statement so that you can begin drafting more of your ideas. Don't worry about making it perfect right now--you can always change, reword, and fix it up later!

    1. Consider using a sentence-pattern for a thesis idea:
        - Main claim (pattern for operational argument): Although [topic] is usually considered to be a [category] , it's better categorized as a[different category] .
        - Main claim (pattern for formal argument): Though [topic] is usually defined as [standard, uncritical definition] , a more accurate definition is [your new definition based on inquiry into the "true nature" of the topic]

4. Outline your ideas and examples

- Keep your essay focused. Choose an issue where there is a clear misunderstanding of a term or terms. Focus on those terms in relation to your claim. The organizational structure can vary and you should see the page "Learn to Write an Argument of Definition" for specifics. As you begin to structure your ideas, consider the following:

    1. **First** – In your introduction, summarize the details of the problem: Why isn't the basic definition good enough at explaining the term? What's missing? End your introduction with a **thesis** that presents your claim for a new definition, explanation, or category.
    2. **Second** – Provide detailed explanations of the idea you want to add as part of the "new definition" of the term. Include supporting points.
    3. **Third** – Present detailed support for all your points with a focus about how your claims works in the world. Include real examples and evidence to *show* your claim.
    4. **Fourth-** (Optional) Consider a negative example. Can you include an example of what this term is *not* in order to help your readers understand what it *is?* Are there examples in the media of it being used in a way you disagree with?
    5. **Fifth** – Finally, in your conclusion, summarize the main points of your claim and relate your issue to the bigger picture. Make it clear to your audience that a new-found understanding of the issue leads to a better understanding and support for your claim. Add the"so what?" to help connect your topic ideas to society and to your readers' real-world.

5. Construct your first essay draft:

- This can be messy and have ideas. Don't worry about it. Relax and just get something down on paper so you can begin to fix it up.
- Consider your audience of professors and other college students
- Include strategies to build your authority and credibility
- Be creative with your attempts to embed some ethos, pathos, and logos into your explanation of the term. To convince your readers of your idea about the term, consider including:
    - 1. **a personal anecdote** (very short story) about how you or others connect with the term in the real world
      2. **an expert quotation** relevant to your ideas (but NOT a simple dictionary definition--assume your readers already know what basic words mean and that you are adding a NEW layer of explanation)
      3. **relevant facts, statistics, or logical information**
      4. **opposing views:** Is there a counterargument or counter example that can be addressed as part of you convincing your audience?
      5. **cultural implications** or the impact of your idea on the greater society

6. Edit and revise your work carefully to fix errors and check for clear understanding:

- Be sure that all your ideas support your main point, you have explained your ideas clearly, and you have provided support and/or examples for each one.
- Check that you've began in an interesting way, connected your ideas to a meaningful concept that matters to a particular community or society as a whole, and ended with powerful wording.

- Have at least one other person read your work. Trade papers with a classmate, see a tutor, or have a friend read your essay. Have that person point out places that don't make sense, need more explanation, or aren't clear.
- Edit your sentences and words, and proofread for accuracy and correctness. Make sure you have complete sentences and correct punctuation and capitalization.
- Format your essay according to MLA guidelines.
- Read it again and again. Make sure it's your very best work before you turn it in!

Additional Tips for Completing this Argument Essay:

- Make absolutely certain to avoid plagiarism of any type. Main ideas and arguments need to be your own. Find a unique way to join the conversation by contributing some piece of your opinion, knowledge, and experience to the topic you choose. The words in your essay need to be completely your own (other than the few word or sentences you choose to quote).
- There's no need to feel shy about expressing your own opinion in an argument essay. While you must have researched, real-world examples to support your ideas, you may also build your authority and credibility by explaining a personal connection with the topic or a related narrative based on your life experience (if you have one). In this case, you may have some parts of your essay written in first person and use "I" or "my."
- Although an MLA Works Cited Page is *not* required for this essay (it's optional--if you're already comfortable with the strategies), it *is* necessary for you to include the TITLE and author/speaker of ANY source you reference. Introduce and carefully integrate any quotations, summary, or paraphrase from a source into your writing. See the page: "Learn to Integrate Quotations into Your Writing (quote sandwich)" for a review of these writing strategies.

The Grading of a Practice Assignment

What goals/skills should I focus on in order to do my best? Your goal is to show your current ability in the following areas that are considered entry-level skills for basic essay writing.

1. Understand the reading assignment and explain the author's ideas briefly and clearly as you reference the text in your essay.
2. Follow the prompt directions. Keep all your ideas tied to the general topic introduced in the reading. *If you don't understand the prompt question in class, ask questions!
3. Follow the basic American-essay guidelines of organizing sentences into logical paragraphs, and paragraphs into an essay. Try to write a clear intro, body, and conclusion (beginning, middle, and end structure).
4. Reveal your skill in critical thinking and your ability to clearly express an idea of your own. Add something of your own to the conversation topic.
5. Include a clear thesis statement that builds on or challenges the ideas of the text. Then offer effective explanation and support for your ideas.
6. Edit and revise with enough accuracy that all ideas are clear and easy for readers to follow. Any errors should not distract from your main point or make your sentences unreadable.

If any part of the above criteria feels new to you, don't worry. Your instructor will assess your skills, look for the positive in your work, and then help you by providing the best guidance and support to move your education forward and get your writing skills to the next level!

If you get a score of "Not Yet," you will need to edit and revise:

Revising your paper is not skimming a paper while watching TV. Revising is focusing on many elements in your draft. While you should edit for sentence-level and grammatical errors while you revise, editing is only a small part of what needs to be accomplished in a revision. You should revise your paper several times before turning it in for a deadline. To revise for a final submission, you may need to completely over-haul your essay to prove that you deserve a better score than you got on a previous draft. Show that you have really become a better writer. If all you do is fix a few grammatical errors, it will likely not result in a significant grade increase, and if your essay still contains other major concerns, you might not receive an improved grade. Learning how to improve your writing through a thorough revision process will not only increase your essay score, but will make you a better writer, which will benefit you in upcoming writing assignments and far beyond the end of this course. Here is a partial list of things to consider while revising an essay.

Refer to the grading rubric. How do you think your essay measures up? What could be changed to improve your rubric score? If you already have feedback from the professor, read it carefully and address ALL of the concerns. If you need to do more studying

to address the concerns please try the Purdue OWL website, your recommended text books, and your class notes.

Once you write a complete draft of your essay, you revise it--adding material, deleting material, and making corrections. You then continue the revision process by revising your paper again...and then again. Have several other people (trusted peers AND tutors from DVC) read and discuss your essay with you. They cannot make changes for you or tell you what to write, but they can discuss elements of your paper that are not clear, disconnected, or need more work. Fresh eyes and an outsider's perspective will do wonders for your writing!

You will need to submit it to Canvas before the revision deadline which will be approximately one-week after you receive your score. Be careful to submit to the correct assignment or it will not get scored! You can still earn a "Pass" for the essay by showing that you have developed skills with the required writing criteria.

Most importantly, don't lose confidence in your ability to work hard and continue learning. The more essays you write (and re-write/revise) the more your skills will be developed and refined. This is a learning opportunity for you and a chance for you to complete your work at an elevated level!

If you get a score of "Pass," you will not need to edit and revise:

This means your writing demonstrated the skills for basic essay writing at a satisfactory level for the assignment. Unless otherwise noted in the assignment directions, this will be determined by the ENGL-122 writing rubric. Students whose writing matches the "meets expectations" or "exceeds expectations" criteria will receive a grade of 100%. You you will be asked to reflect on what you did well for this assignment and what your goals are for improvement. You will need to then apply your new knowledge and goals to your future writing. It means you are ready to move on to the next writing task in this course. Please continue to develop additional writing skills and advance your writing with deeper ideas. The writing assignments in this class will continue to get more advanced and more challenging!

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2.3: Researched Argument Essay

RESEARCH-WRITING PHASE 1 (Source and Topic Selection)

Lesson Introduction

This Canvas assignment is the first phase of a bigger research project that will become a Formal Research Essay; the steps of this research/discussion assignment are just the beginning.

The more thought and effort you contribute to these early phases of the research essay, the better your final product will be (and the less stress you will have in the final phases of the research essay process).

Step 1: Get a *New York Times* student account

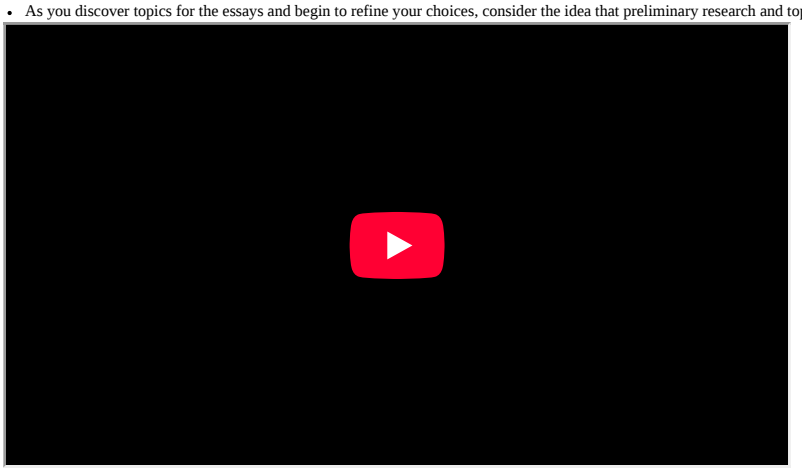
If you haven't done it yet, you will need to complete the following steps to access your student account.

- Go to the DVC library website's A-Z list of databases. (Links to an external site.)
- Find *The New York Times digital* website source and type in Diablo Valley College as your school.
- Create your student account to gain free access to the *New York Times.*

And remember to use the library support page of this module, to guide you in setting up your account and searching for an adequate source article on a topic you want to research.

Step 2: Search interesting topics and find a source article you want to continue to work with

- Go to the *New York Times* website, open the search bar, enter “Brain Filter” into the search bar, and a long list of articles will come up.
- Scroll through the headlines – use the Show More button - open and read at least three articles.
- If you already have a topic in mind, and haven't found an article for this topic with the "brain filter," try searching some other terms in the NYT search bar. See what comes up as you try different words related to your topic idea.
- Select one article that addresses an aspect of brain research that is most interesting to you. You will need to choose a general topic that has a connection to some part of David Eagleman's book. You will be working with this topic for several weeks, so keep refining your search until you find an article that covers a topic you care about and that is meaningful to your real life. It must also be in some-way related to our readings and discussions of *The Brain.*
- Carefully read your selected article (more than once) and take notes.
- As you discover topics for the essays and begin to refine your choices, consider the idea that preliminary research and topic-selection must work together:





Step 3: Summarize, Paraphrase, and Quote

- Write a summary paragraph of this article that restates the author's central message (thesis).
- Paraphrase the portion of this article that addresses your interest in this topic most directly.
- Select a quote from this article that reflects a discovery - something that is surprising or unexpected or especially clever or provocative. Then, complete the three parts of quoting: copy the quote, explain the context, and respond with a thought of your own.

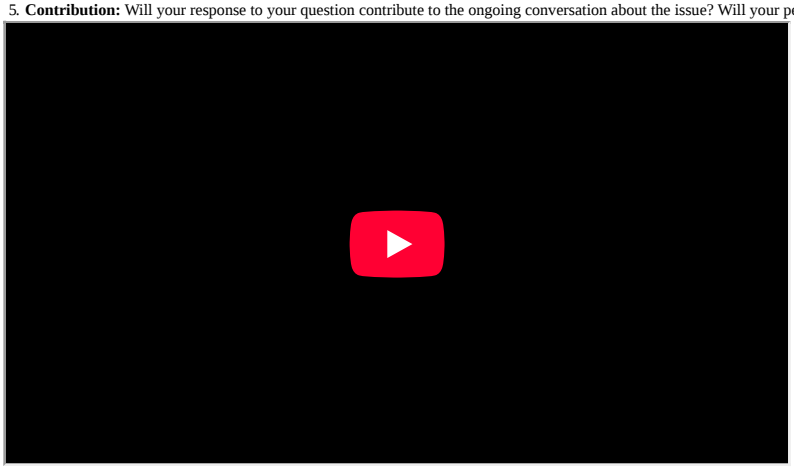
Step **4: Develop research questions to guide your ideas**

- Think critically about the main topic of the NYT article you have selected. This will become the general topic of your research project and you will refine and narrow the topic into a workable research question throughout the next phase of the writing process.
- Create three questions about your topic that are answered in your NYT article.
- Develop three additional questions you have about your topic that are not answered in your NYT article. The will guide your continued research and help you develop a thesis idea that contributes to the bigger conversation.

The eventual answers that you develop for one or more of your research questions will likely become the thesis argument for your research essay. Therefore, as you work on drafting your possible research questions and narrowing down your essay topic, keep these five criteria in mind:

1. **Personal Investment:** Is this an issue you care about? Do you have a relevant connection to the topic? If the issue is too broad, is there a way you can narrow down the topic to an aspect of the issue that is of the most importance to you?
2. **Debatable Subject:** Could two reasonable people looking at evidence about this issue come to different conclusions? Is it arguable, controversial, and important for others in society to discuss?

3. **Researchable Issue:** Can you locate or collect adequate evidence to support ideas and claims on this issue? Can you find both formal and sources of information, logical support, and public opinion that can help you develop and explain the issue you want to discuss?
4. **Feasibility:** Is the scope of the research question manageable, given the limited time you have to research the issue and the amount of space (1100-1300 words) in which you will make your argument? Can you effectively argue, explain, and support the ideas you want to discuss in the scope of this argumentative research essay assignment?
5. **Contribution:** Will your response to your question contribute to the ongoing conversation about the issue? Will your perspective be original and important enough that other's should read your essay?





Directions **for posting to this discussion task:**

Please submit

1. A link to the *New York Times* article you selected
2. A one-paragraph summary that introduces the article's author, title, thesis, and key ideas. Use only your own words for this (no quotations).
3. One paragraph in which you paraphrase a part of the essay that you think is most interesting and/or important for you essay topic AND explain how the idea/s you are paraphrasing form this author can relate to the topic you want to research and discuss for your essay assignment. In other words, what's one important thing the author said and how/why did it lead you to selecting this article and this topic for your essay?
4. One paragraph that contains a specific direct-quote (use quotation marks) from the article AND your explanation of the context, the significance, and your response ideas about it. Create a source sandwich!
5. 6 research questions (related to the topic you have chosen), the answers to which could become an arguable thesis statement for your essay.

RESEARCH PHASE 2 (Sources, Connections, Your Ideas, DRAFT YOUR THESIS!)

This assignment is the SECOND phase of a multi-week research project. The steps of this assignment are continuing from last week's preliminary research assignment. The more thought and effort you contribute to these early phases of the research essay, the better your final product will be and the less stress you will have in the final phase of the research essay process.

You should have PREVIOUSLY COMPLETED the following from PHASE 1:

- Set up your free student account with the *New York Times*
- Searched and found a *NYT* source article that discusses the brain topic you are interested in
- Summarized, Paraphrased, and Quoted parts of the *NYT* source article you selected
- Developed research questions (these will help guide your research process and discovering some answers will help you develop an argument statement of your own)

Your on-going goals for PHASE 2 of the research project:

1. **Consider the connections** between what you learned in your NYT article and what you learned from *The Brain: The Story of You*. Look for quotes, vocabulary, and inquiry that link these two sources.
2. **Consider the connections** between your personal experience and knowledge about your topic and what is argued in the sources you have collected so far (your chosen NYT article and David Eagleman's book).
3. **Continue researching**--collect additional sources to build your background knowledge of the topic and give you an understanding of the existing conversation related to your topic--- you will not need to cite sources that you use only for your own knowledge of the topic.
4. **Continue researching**--collect additional sources and opinions that you think might be helpful to cite in your essay as a quote, paraphrase, or summary.
5. **Consider a variety of source types and authority** as you continue to research your topic and develop your argument. There is a place and a purpose for each source type explained above and you should get comfortable using them all to informally support your knowledge base and to formally establish your arguments in college writing. The DVC library workshop in this unit module discusses some source types and how to select what you need for an assignment.
6. **Think more about how *you* plan to join the existing conversation** surrounding your topic with a thesis argument of your own creation and from your own perspective.

What to submit for this discussion task

Step 1-- Search and locate the 4-6 sources you plan to use for your researched-argument essay and list your source information in your discussion post.

When you draft and complete your essay assignment, you will need to support your ideas and build your credibility with the use of the following correctly-cited source types:

• **One or more formal/authoritative source = *The Brain: The Story of You.***

• Two or more popular news sources = Your *NYT* article and at least one more news article that you search and find

•One or more informal source (common web-based or even social-media-based sources that reflect the community opinion and discussion surrounding the topic)

You will need to spend lots of time researching your topic! Read many different types of sources and gather information. Carefully select the sources that you think will be most meaningful to your essay ideas. You will probably not (and should not!) find sources that say your exact thesis statement, but they should relate to the topic and help you explain and support your ideas.

Post what you think will be the best sources that you will want to incorporate into your essay. If you change your mind later as you draft your essay assignment, that is okay.

You will only post a list of your 4-6 sources for step 1; provide the links if possible, so your classmates and I can find and read your interesting finds!

Step 2--Make connections as you synthesize the relevant information on your topic:

Write one paragraph that explains the connection you found between your *NYT* article (and/or other articles you've discovered in research) and what you learned from *The Brain: The Story of You*. Explain how the different sources you chose in step 2 will contribute to your discussion of the topic. Do they share similar ideas? Do any show the opposition to the argument? Do they have different perspectives about or different example of the topic?

Post one complete paragraph for step 2!

Step 3--Explain how *you* plan to join the existing conversation surrounding your topic.

Write one paragraph that explains your ideas and perspective on this topic. Why do you think it's important to know about? Why do you think it's arguable or controversial? What's the opposing side that some people believe and why do you think your argument is important for those people to understand? What is it you really want to say about this topic that contributes a new idea, perspective, example, or importance to the topic?

Post one complete paragraph for step 3!

Step 4--Write a clear thesis statement that says the main idea you want to add to the conversation. Make sure it is arguable/debatable, and that it is in some way connected to the idea of brain research.

As you completed additional research and located your sources for this researched-argument essay, you likely thought more about your topic and the conversation as it exists within the community. Consider the research questions you developed in phase one (and throughout your source collection) and consider if any of those questions can be answered as an effective argument statement for your essay. Decide how you can refine your topic into a potential thesis idea that's specific enough to be interesting, debatable, and thoroughly covered in 1100-1300 words.

Make sure your thesis statement . . .

- is debatable and states a strong argument or angle on the topic.
  - If there is no-one who would disagree or argue the opposition, then it's not a debatable argument
- lets readers know the main idea of the essay.
- is complete and specific enough that readers won't immediately ask: What? How? Why? What do you mean? So what?
  - For example: a thesis that declares something such as "This leads to positive benefits" is not specific enough because readers will immediately ask, "What benefits do you mean?" Instead, be clear with the precise idea/s your essay will argue.
- is not so specific that it cannot be developed and supported well in the length requirements of the assignment.

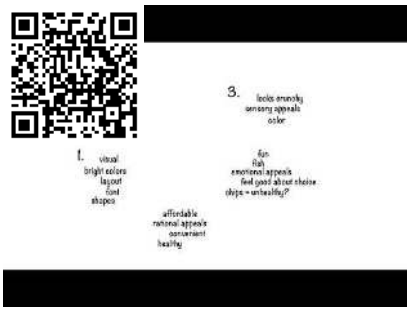
You will only post a single (strong, arguable, and very well-written) thesis statement for step 4!

RESEARCH PHASE 3 (Outlining and Drafting)

Preparing an Outline or a Graphic Organizer

After you have written a thesis statement and chosen a method of organization, take a few minutes to create an outline or graphic organizer of the essay's main points in the order you plan to discuss them. This is especially important when your essay is long or complex. Outlining or drawing a graphic organizer can help you see how ideas fit together and may reveal places where you need to add supporting information.





Why and How to Create a Useful Outline

Why create an outline? There are many reasons, but in general, it may be helpful to create an outline when you want to show the hierarchical relationship or logical ordering of information. For research papers, an outline may help you keep track of large amounts of information. For creative writing, an outline may help organize the various plot threads and help keep track of character traits. Many people find that organizing an oral report or presentation in outline form helps them speak more effectively in front of a crowd. Below are the primary reasons for creating an outline.

- Aids in the process of writing
- Helps you organize your ideas
- Presents your material in a logical form
- Shows the relationships among ideas in your writing
- Constructs an ordered overview of your writing
- Defines boundaries and groups

How do I create an outline?

- Determine the purpose of your paper.
- Determine the audience you are writing for.
- Develop the thesis of your paper.

Then:

- **Brainstorm**: List all the ideas that you want to include in your paper.
- **Organize**: Group related ideas together.
- **Order**: Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete.
- **Label**: Create main and sub headings.

Remember: creating an outline before writing your paper will make organizing your thoughts a lot easier. Whether you follow the suggested guidelines is up to you, but making any kind of outline (even just some jotting down some main ideas) will be beneficial to your writing process.

Remember to SANDWICH your quotes. Say what your going to say, Say it (the quote), then say it again. [In other words: Set up your quote, give the quote, and then provide commentary on you quote by answering "why is this quote important?"]

LEARNING STYLE OPTIONS

If you have a pragmatic learning style, a verbal learning style, or both, preparing an outline will probably appeal to you. If you are a creative or spatial learner, however, you may prefer to draw a graphic organizer.

Whichever method you find more appealing, begin by putting your working thesis statement at the top of a page and listing your main points below. Leave plenty of space between main points. While you are filling in details that support one main point, you will often think of details or examples to use in support of a different one. As these details or examples occur to you, jot them down under or next to the appropriate main point on your outline or graphic organizer.

Creating an Argument Outline

Although there is no set model of organization for argumentative essays, there are some common patterns that writers might use or that writers might want to combine/customize in an effective way.

For more information on possibilities for setting up ideas in an outline, click here to read Types of Outlines site.) from the Purdue University On-line Writing Lab.

Below are 3 different patterns that you can consider. Also, beneath these are 3 additional outlines that you can choose from if you'd like to print and fill one in.

Outline I	*Outline II*	*Outline III*
Introduction/Thesis-Claim (Links to an external site.) **Body Paragraph (Links to an external site.) 1**: Present your 1st point and supporting evidence. **Body Paragraph 2**: Present your 2nd point and it's supporting evidence. **Body Paragraph 3**: Refute (Links to an external site.) your opposition's first point. **Body Paragraph 4**: Refute (Links to an external site.) your opposition's second point. **Conclusion/Restate Thesis (Links to an external site.)**	**Introduction/Thesis-Claim (Links to an external site.)** **Body Paragraph (Links to an external site.) 1**: Refute (Links to an external site.) your opposition's first point. **Body Paragraph 2**: Refute (Links to an external site.) your opposition's second point. **Body Paragraph 3**: Present your first point and supporting evidence. **Body Paragraph 4**: Present your second point and supporting evidence. **Conclusion/Restate Thesis (Links to an external site.)**	**Introduction/Thesis-Claim (Links to an external site.)** **Body Paragraph (Links to an external site.) 1**: Present your first point and it's supporting evidence, which also refutes (Links to an external site.) one of your opposition's claims. **Body Paragraph 2**: Present your second point and it's supporting evidence, which also refutes (Links to an external site.) a second opposition claim. **Body Paragraph 3**: Present your third point and it's supporting evidence, which also refutes (Links to an external site.) a third opposition claim. **Conclusion/Restate Thesis (Links to an external site.)**

3 Additional Outlines that You Can Print and Use:

Basic 5-Paragraph (Argument) Essay Outline: This outline also serves for other essays such as research papers, or the basic 5-paragraph essay. Highlight-and-print outline to fill in.

Another Argument Essay Outline: This outline asks questions that help you critically think about your topic. Highlight-and-print outline to fill in.

Argument/Research Paper Outline Guide: This outline can help guide you through a series of questions. You can highlight-and-print this outline, but it's not a fill-in-the-blank outline; use it as a guide. Many of my students like to use this outline for both research papers and argumentative papers.



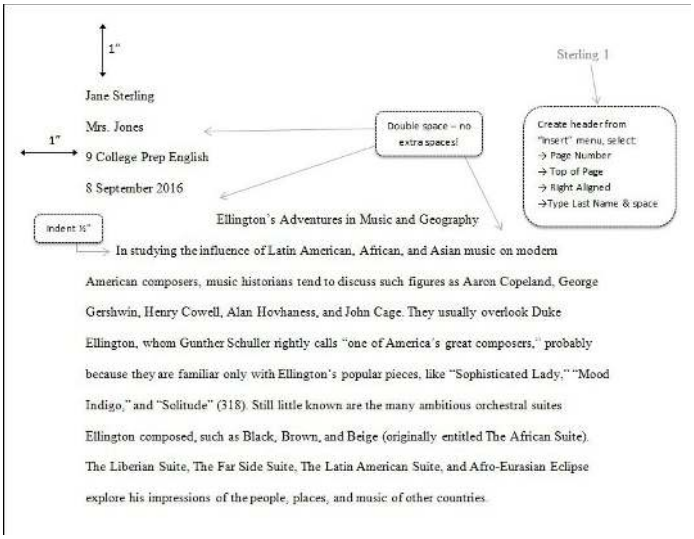
'RITING PHASE 4 (Final Editing, Formatting, and Checking of Your Essay)

Check Your Formatting

1. Use the rules of title case for your own unique title as well as for the titles of all your sources:



2. Check your heading and page set up for MLA style:



3. Remove any extra line spaces that create a space larger than 2.0:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Avt9fWRGZ_Y

4. Check the OWL Purdue website for MLA guidelines and rules to follow for a college essay

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Edit VERY **Thoroughly**

- Check your essay for errors. Read it carefully sentence by sentence. Look up grammar concerns when you're not sure. Review the rules for writing complete sentences. Check for capital letters and punctuation. A final draft of a college essay assignment should not have any careless errors that you know how to fix yourself.
- Delete any clutter or unnecessary wording in your essay. Read through every sentence and see what you can re-write to be more clear and direct to the point you want to make.
- Have several other students help you find parts of your essay that don't make sense, are missing words, or need more explanation.
- Your final draft will not be ready until you've had many other people read it over and provide feedback and revision suggestions to you. Use the tutoring resources available to you.

Revise Your Essay Draft with this Checklist

- Does this paper fulfill **all** requirements of the **assignment**?
- Does this paper have a **thesis**? Is the thesis **specific**?
- Does this paragraph have **topic sentences** at the beginning of each body paragraph? Do the topic sentences both connect to the thesis and introduce what I will be talking about in the paragraph itself?
- Are there paragraphs that seem to be **too long** or **too short**? Are the paragraphs relatively similar lengths?
- Have I examined my paper for **excess repetition** (of words, phrases, sentence constructions)?
- Are there **transitions between paragraphs**?
- Are there **transitions between sentences**?
- Does the **conclusion** do more than simply repeat the introduction, or summarize my argument? Have I extrapolated anything meaningful? Have I explained to my audience why this paper is important to them?
- If quotations have been used, have they been smoothly **integrated** into the text with my own sentence both before and after the quote, including **signal phrases**?
- Have I properly formatted quotes over three lines (using indentation)?
- Have I used an appropriate **number and variety of sources** (per the assignment requirements)?
- Have I documented paraphrases and quotations appropriately, using an **approved citation guide** (MLA)?
- Does the paper have an **original, meaningful title**?
- Have I included **page numbers**?
- Have I maintained consistent use of **verb tense**?
- Have I used **strong verbs**?
- Have I used **active and passive voice appropriately**, given the field of writing?
- Have I read the entire paper **aloud**, one word at a time, to check for simple errors?
- Have I eliminated **unnecessary words**?
- Have I carefully proofread the paper for **spelling and punctuation**?

Check for varied sentence structure and length: With a pen in your hand, read your paper out loud. At the end of each sentence, make a slash mark (/). Look at your sentences: are they very long? Very short? Mix it up!

Check for complete sentences: Starting from the last sentence in your paper, read it backwards, one sentence at a time. This helps you focus on a single sentence. Double-underline the subject and underline the verb for each independent clause. Make sure each subject has a verb. A sentence that starts with for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, although, as, because, or which runs a high risk of being a sentence fragment, so read it out loud to check if any additional words are needed or if it should be connected to the previous sentence. Be on the lookout for misplaced or absent commas that result in run-on sentences or comma splices.

Check pronouns' referents: Draw a small square around each pronoun. Draw an arrow to the pronoun's antecedent/referent. Check that your writing is clear and specific on who or what the pronoun is referring to (Does the reader know who they are? Can the reader easily know what you mean by it?). Check for singular/plural consistency.

Check transitional words and phrases: Draw a wavy line under each transitional word or phrase (moreover, in addition, on the other hand, etc.). You should have some transitions but not too many. Is each transitional word being used appropriately?

Check that you completed all the requirements of the assignment

- Did you create **a strong thesis argument** that is **related to the brain**? Make sure your thesis:
- 1. is debatable.
  2. states an opinion or provides an angle on the specific topic.
  3. lets readers know what the main idea of the essay is.

4. is specific but not so specific that you were not able to develop it well in the length requirements of the assignment.
5. doesn't lead readers to immediately ask "How?" "Why?" or "So what?"

- Do you have **all the source types USED in your assignment as a paraphrase, summary, or direct quotation** and do you clearly introduce the source information in your essay?

1. One or more formal source = *The Brain: The Story of You*
2. Two or more popular news source = Your *NYT* article and one more
3. One or more informal source = a web-based source that reflect the community discussion of the topic

- Did you cut all clutter and redundancy from your sentences and paragraphs and do you STILL have an essay that falls somewhere between **1100-1300 words** (not including the Works Cited page)?
- Did you avoid slang, cliches, and a causal/conversational tone? Did you create a voice and **style that is strong and direct?** Did you write with **a tone that's personal, informative, and appropriate** for this college essay assignment?
- Did you create a Works Cited page that follows the rules of MLA documentation.
- Were you careful to avoid ALL TYPES of PLAGIARISM?

Check Your Source Documentation

- Use the OWL Purdue website to look up rules when you have questions
- Use in-sentence information to introduce sources before a summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation:

You cannot use information from any website or published book unless you give the author (or site) credit both inside your text and at the end of your paper. In other words, it is not enough to simply list the sources you used on a Works Cited page or References list.

As your instructor reads your essay, he or she should clearly be able to see which sentences, facts, or sections of your essay came from Source A, Source B, Source C, etc. by looking at your in-text citations.

You can give credit to your sources within your text in two different ways: by using a signal phrase or by simply using an in-text citation.

Signal phrase: signal phrase lets the reader know, right at the beginning of the sentence, that the information he or she is about to read comes from another source.

Example: According to John Smith, author of Pocahontas Is My Love, "Native American women value a deep spiritual connection to the environment" (53).

Notice that since I took a direct quote from John Smith's book, I placed those words in quotation marks. Also notice that because I explained who wrote the book, what book it comes from, and on what page to find the quote in the book, the reader is easily able not only to find the source on his/her own to check my facts, but the reader is also more likely to believe what I have to say now that they know that my information comes from a credible source.

- Use in-text citations (also called parenthetical citations) for page numbers, whenever your source has page numbers. Use this for summaries, paraphrase, and direct quotations.
- Also include the author's last name in the parenthetical citation ONLY if you did not already make it clear with a signal phrase and source introduction in your sentence.

In-Text Citation: Use an in-text citation in situations where you are not quoting someone directly but rather using information from another source such as a fact, summary, or paraphrase to support your own ideas.

Example: When weighing the costs of college with the benefits of getting a degree, it is important to note that “the rate of return on investment in higher education is high enough to warrant the financial burden associated with pursuing a college degree” (Porter 464).

Notice that it's clear within this sentence that I'm referring to a person’s belief or conclusion, but since this person's name does not appear at the beginning of the sentence, I have placed her name and the page number where I retrieved this information in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

- Summarize sources effectively and cite them correctly to avoid plagiarism:
  - **Summarize** an article or a larger section of an article whenever you simply want to present the author's general ideas in your essay. Summaries are most often used to condense larger texts into more manageable chucks.

How to Write an Effective Summary: Cover up the original article. It is key that you not quote from the original work. Restate what you've read in your own words and be sure to give the author credit using an in-text citation.

Example: Katherine Porter believes that, while getting a college degree can be expensive and time consuming, the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. She discusses the economic, social, and cultural benefits of higher education in "The Value of a College Degree.”

- Paraphrase sources effectively and cite them correctly to avoid plagiarism:
  - **Paraphrase your sources** whenever you believe that you can make the information from a source shorter and/or clearer for your audience. A paraphrase is not an exact copy of the original, so simply changing a few words here and there is not acceptable.

    Take a look at these examples:

    The original passage from *The Confident Student*: “Whatever your age, health and well-being can affect your ability to do well in college. If you don’t eat sensibly, stay physically fit, manage your stress, and avoid harmful substances, then your health and your grades will suffer” (Kanar 158).

    A legitimate paraphrase: No matter what condition your body is in, you can pretty much guarantee that poor health habits will lead to a lack of academic success. Students need to take time for their physical and emotional well-being, as well as their studies, during college (Kanar 158).

    Because the art of paraphrasing is more concise than summarizing, a true paraphrase shows that you as a researcher completely understand the source work.

- Quote sources effectively and cite them correctly to avoid plagiarism:
  - If you need help incorporating your sources into your essay, the first thing you'll need to remember is that **quotes cannot stand alone**—they can't be placed in a sentence all by themselves. You need to make each quote a part of your essay by **introducing it beforehand and commenting on it afterward**.

    Think of each quote like a sandwich—the quote is the meat on the inside, but before you taste the meat, you must also be introduced to the sandwich by the bread. After you bite down on that meat, you need the other piece of bread to round out the meal.

    The top piece of bread will tell us where the quote came from and/or how it fits in with what’s already been discussed in the essay. The bottom piece of bread points out what was important about the quote and elaborates on what was being said.

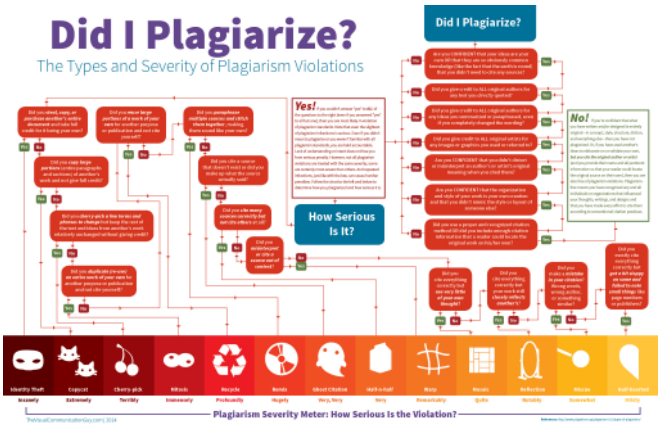
- The source information in your essay, leads readers to the corresponding source entry in your Works Cited Page, where they will find the rest of the details related to that source:

- The Works Cited page should begin at the top of the page and will become the last page of your essay document. Title it correctly Works Cited and follow all the rules for MLA documentation.

Check Very Carefully that You Have Not plagiarized!

Plagiarism is a hot topic in the academic world, but it applies in all aspects of our lives. In a country and culture that values intellectual property, it is imperative that we are conscious of plagiarism guidelines and standards. The reality is, in many facets of life, when we make mistakes, we can claim ignorance. But when it comes to plagiarizing, there is little slack given; we are all expected to understand plagiarism guidelines and what constitutes a violation.

While plagiarism is never considered acceptable, there are varying levels of severity with different types of plagiarism violations. So are you wondering if you've plagiarized? Here's a quick guide to help show you what constitutes the many areas of plagiarism and how serious each violation is.



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2.4: Academic Research Essay

Overview

For this assignment, you will go back to the topic you chose for your Researched-Argument about the Brain. You will now write a 500-750 word (2-3 page, double spaced) literature-review essay on the same topic (this is sometimes called research-background or past-research). A literature review is an important part of research you will be asked to complete throughout your college experience, especially for the type of big research project you will complete for an advanced degree such as a master's or PhD.

You already got a good idea of the conversation that exists about your topic according to informal and news sources, and as well as the community perspective. Now, in this new assignment, you will review and join the academic conversation that has taken place surrounding your topic. You will access scholarly sources to increase your understanding of the topic related to the human brain. You will continue the discussion about your topic by reviewing a minimum of three scholarly sources and becoming a speaker in the existing academic conversation.

Assignment Objectives and Directives

- Improve, revise, and edit the thesis statement (argument/claim/main idea) from your previous essay relating to brain research. Determine whether you need to narrow your focus. Use your instructor/tutor comments, module resources, and your own reflections to re-write, re-word, and strengthen your thesis. Be sure to check for grammatical correctness and parallel structure.
- Conduct scholarly research using the library databases to search for journal articles connected to the general topic of your brain research essay (remember, the articles might not cover your exact thesis idea--and that's good!) Select your three sources carefully so that you can explain and respond to their main ideas. Remember: hey must be from ACADEMIC JOURNALS to count as scholarship research for this assignment.
- Write a new introduction for your new sources and your revised thesis statement. This introduction needs to introduce your topic in a more formal way, reference the general research topics discussed in the 3 scholarly sources you've selected, and reveal your new-and-improved thesis argument.
- Demonstrate a deepened understanding of your topic and the conversation that is happening within formal sources and among intelligent academics. Use your summary and paraphrase skills to make sure you explain the author's ideas without plagiarizing. Then, join those who are sharing significant ideas on this topic!
- Connect your own main ideas and opinions to the content review. Consider what you bring to the conversation. Consider how your opinions contribute to an ongoing debate. Consider what has not yet been researched or what is missing from the discussion. What questions do you still have? What knowledge is missing that could greatly benefit society if discovered?
- Write with a high style of formality. Demonstrate your ability to be precise and direct.
- Edit carefully, cut clutter, vary your sentences, and transition effectively.
- Include a works cited page in MLA format. Be very careful to check all the details of your essay and works cited page to follow all the MLA guidelines.

Review of Scholarly Source Info

Please review what you learned and practiced in your previous scholarly-research assignment, especially the following critical pieces:

1. How can I turn my ideas for an essay topic into search terms to begin my research?





2. How can I use the DVC library databases for scholarly research?

Find the academic journal articles in the DVC library databases

• Go to the DVC library website
• At the bottom (under FIND), click on A-Z list of databases
• Click the first option in the list: "a**cademic search complete" (**enter DVC as your school and log in)

• Look under the big search bar and click **“advanced search”**

Use filters to search the DVC library databases

1. Enter a key search term related to your topic (use AND, OR, NOT) and hit SEARCH (see the videos above, if you're not sure how)
2. Look at the left menu and apply filters: Check the box for **Full text** and **Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals**
3. Set the date range (within 5 years? 10 years? 15 years?) Your choice depends on your topic. Do you want to see the history of something? Change over time? Or only modern sources? Set the range that you want to see.
4. Don’t worry about “source type” because you already selected scholarly journals
5. Select subject filters:
   Read through the subjects (these are subject topics that show you what your search results are without you having to read through all the article title), click **“show more,”** click on the topics that are most relevant to what you want to know
6. Click on title, read subject terms and abstract, determine whether this article will be useful for you

7. **Click on the full text link . Do NOT just read the abstract.** An abstract is just a very short summary of the actual article. When you have a long/complex article, open the full-text, but focus your reading on the intro and conclusion sections, as well as any past research that's used/reviewed/explained (such as a literature review or a references section).
8. **Download.** Click the down arrow at the top right. Save the full article to a safe place on your computer (don't just save the link).

3. How do I read a journal article?

- Read abstracts first, to help you make your source selections. An abstract is a short summary of the articles main ideas. However, do NOT stop reading there. Any quotes you use in your essay should come from the full article, not just the abstract.
- You do NOT need to read/understand the whole article . Sometimes they are very long, but can still contain great information for you to use in your research.
- Focus your reading on the following sections (these sections may have different names in different articles, or may not be named at all, but will probably still be there if you look for them):
  - Introduction
  - Conclusion (Findings)
  - Past Research (Literature review)
  - References (Works Cited)
  - Anything else you find important or interesting as you scan through the article
- You can often avoid reading parts of an article that explain a research process in detail (research methodology or process) since that probably won't be very important to the main ideas of your essay topic. Focus instead on the ideas that came from the research. These will likely be explained in a conclusion section.

4. How can I use scholarly sources AND avoid plagiarism?

Sometimes people copy words/phrases/sentences because they don't understand what the article is saying or how to reword it. My advice to you:

- Do NOT copy words or phrases from a source (unless it's used a direct quotation with a correct citation).
- Choose the article you select very carefully. Do NOT simply pick the first article that comes up in your search. Choose one that has something you find interesting, is clearly related to your topic (though it might not be EXACTLY like your essay's thesis--and that's actually a god thing), and contains at least some material and ideas that you understand well. If you don't understand anything from the article, keep searching. There may be an article that is better suited to your needs.
- Use all the skills you've practiced and developed about summary and paraphrasing to make sure you REALLY REALLY COMPLETELY change the wording of all the ideas you want to summarize or paraphrase.
- Cite your sources. Make sure the title and author are always clear to your readers, whether you are using a direct quotation (with quotation marks), or a summary/ paraphrase of an author's idea (in your own words). Introduce all sources clearly with a sentence or two that reveals the source and use citation verb and attributive tags to continue to refer to the author (The author explains, the writer describes, the researcher concludes, etc.) After EVERY quote, summary, or paraphrase in your essay, always include a parenthetical citation with the page number to say where you got that particular piece of information. Write in-text citations in MLA format.
- Include a Works Cited page as the last page of your essay that clearly cites all sources that you used in your essay. Do NOT cite sources that you read or looked at, but did not reference in your essay. Follow the MLA guide for a Works Cited page.
- Before you submit an assignment that incorporates other people's words and ideas, it's always a good idea to run your essay (or written speech) through a plagiarism checker.

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3: Reading to Figure out the Argument

Understand the Claims the Author Makes

As we make notes on what a writer is claiming at each point, it is worth distinguishing what kind of claim they are making.

1. Claims of Policy

The most familiar kind of argument demands action. It is easy to see when the writer is asking readers to do something. Here are a few phrases that signal a claim of policy, a claim that is pushing readers to do something:

- We should _____.
- We ought to _____.
- We must _____.
- Let's _____.
- The best course is _____.
- The solution is to _____.
- The next step should be _____.
- We should consider _____.
- Further research should be done to determine _____.

Here are a few sample claims of policy:

- Landlords should not be allowed to raise the rent more than 2% per year.
- The federal government should require a background check before allowing anyone to buy a gun.
- Social media accounts should not be censored in any way.

A claim of policy can also look like a direct command, such as "So if you are an American citizen, don't let anything stop you from voting."

Note that not all claims of policy give details or specifics about what should be done or how. Sometimes an author is only trying to build momentum and point us in a certain direction. For example, "Schools must find a way to make bathrooms more private for everyone, not just transgender people."

Claims of policy don't have to be about dramatic actions. Even discussion, research, and writing are kinds of action. For example, "Americans need to learn more about other wealthy nations' health care systems in order to see how much better things could be in America."

2. Claims of Fact

Arguments do not always point toward action. Sometimes writers want us to share their vision of reality on a particular subject. They may want to paint a picture of how something happened, describe a trend, or convince us that something is bad or good.

In some cases, the writer may want to share a particular vision of what something is like, what effects something has, how something is changing, or of how something unfolded in the past. The argument might define a phenomenon, a trend, or a period of history.

Often these claims are simply presented as fact, and an uncritical reader may not see them as arguments at all. However, very often claims of fact are more controversial than they seem. For example, consider the claim, "Caffeine boosts performance." Does it really? How much? How do we know? Performance at what kind of task? For everyone? Doesn't it also have downsides? A writer could spend a book convincing us that caffeine really boosts performance and explaining exactly what they mean by those three words.

Some phrases writers might use to introduce a claim of fact include the following:

- Research suggests that _____.
- The data indicate that _____.
- _____is increasing or decreasing.
- There is a trend toward _____.
- _____causes _____
- _____leads to _____.

Often a claim of fact will be the basis for other claims about what we should do that look more like what we associate with the word “argument.” However, many pieces of writing in websites, magazines, office settings, and academic settings don’t try to move people toward action. They aim primarily at getting readers to agree with their view of what is fact. For example, it took many years of argument, research, and public messaging before most people accepted the claim that “Smoking causes cancer.”

Here are a few arguable sample claims of fact:

- It is easier to grow up biracial in Hawaii than in any other part of the United States.
- Raising the minimum wage will force many small businesses to lay off workers.
- The current drought is partly due to climate change.
- Antidepressants provide the most benefit when combined with talk therapy.

3. Claims of Value

In other cases, the writer is not just trying to convince us that something is a certain way or causes something, but is trying to say how good or bad that thing is. They are rating it, trying to get us to share her assessment of its value. Think of a movie or book review or an Amazon or Yelp review. Even a “like” on Facebook or a thumbs up on a text message is a claim of value.

Claims of value are fairly easy to identify. Some phrases that indicate a claim of value include the following:

- _____is terrible/disappointing/underwhelming.
- _____is mediocre/average/decent/acceptable.
- We should celebrate _____.
- _____is great, wonderful, fantastic, impressive, makes a substantial contribution to _____.

A claim of value can also make a comparison. It might assert that something is better than, worse than, or equal to something else. Some phrases that signal a comparative claim of value include these:

- _____is the best _____.
- _____is the worst _____.
- _____is better than _____.
- _____is worse than _____.
- _____is just as good as _____.
- _____is just as bad as _____

The following are examples of claims of value:

- The Bay Area is the best place to start a biotech career.
- Forest fires are becoming the worst threat to public health in California.
- Human rights are more important than border security.
- Experimenting with drag is the best way I’ve found to explore my feelings about masculinity and femininity.
- It was so rude when that lady asked you what race you are.

Note that the above arguments all include claims of fact but go beyond observing to praise or criticize what they are observing.

Take Notes While You Read an Argument

A first step toward summarizing and responding to an argument is to first make margin notes on the claims. Let’s take the following argument as an example:

Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?

All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?

I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.

If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?

If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.

We can often paraphrase the claims more readily on a second read when we are already familiar with the content. Some need the physicality of taking notes by hand in the margins of a book or a printout. Some take notes by creating comments in Word or Google Docs. Others use online annotation systems like Hypothes.is. (Links to an external site.) Another way is to copy the text into a table in a word processing program and write notes in a second column, as we have done below:

Section of the text	Notes on the claims
Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?	Implies a claim of fact: we would all cross the border (under what circumstances?)
All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?	Suggests a claim of value: It might not be wrong to cross illegally. But also suggests another claim of value: that "the rule of law" is right. Is this a contradiction?
I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.	Claim of policy about the border--we shouldn't criminalize people who have legitimate reasons to cross. Admits there are security risks in "open borders." Looking for some kind of middle ground that keeps us safe but doesn't criminalize migrants.
If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?	Claim of fact: the author would consider it right to cross illegally to benefit their children. That is, if their whole family didn't have enough money, a safe place to live, or access to a good education. They imply another claim of fact: that any parent would do the same and feel okay about it.

Section of the text	Notes on the claims
If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.	Starts with the same claim of fact as in the title and the previous paragraph: most people would cross the border illegally. Adds the idea that we wouldn't feel it was wrong. The implication is that if all these people would feel it is right, then it really is "ethical and reasonable." "We must recognize" implies a claim of policy--that people should talk about illegal crossings publicly in a different way than we do now. Claim of policy: Border walls and detention centers are not right. Ends with three policy recommendations for how to treat migrants: empathy, respect, and help.

Notice that attempting to summarize each claim can actually take more space than the original text itself if we are summarizing in detail and trying to be very precise about what the text claims and implies. Of course, we won't want to or need to do this in such detail for every paragraph of every reading we are assigned to write about. We can resort to it when the argument gets harder to follow or when it's especially important to be precise.

Decide Which is the Author's Main Claim

Now that we have this list of claims in the margin of the text, we know some of the things that the author wants us to believe. How do we sort them and put them in relation to each other? In this case, we found claims of policy, fact, and value, some of which were repeated in different parts of the argument. Which claim is the main point? How do other claims support this one?

We can try asking ourselves the following questions to see if we already have a sense of what the argument's goal is.

- What does the writer want us to believe?
- What does the writer most want to convince us of?
- Where is the writer going with this?
- If the writer had to make their point in just one sentence, what would they say?

A good first place to look for the focus, of course, is the title. Often the title will declare the main claim outright. Here, the title question "Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?" implies the answer "Yes." We can look for the same idea in the text and check whether it seems to be the main one. The third paragraph describes why the author would cross the border and then generalizes to claim that others would do the same. At the start of the last paragraph, the writer declares that " ...most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so." Note that this is a claim of fact about what people would do and how they would feel about it.

But is this the main claim? When we review the other sections, we find several other claims of policy. Introductions set expectations, and here, the first paragraph alludes to public debates on immigration policy. It suggests that it may not be right to stop people from coming into America, and it may not be wrong to cross the border, even illegally. These early references to what is right suggest that the argument aims to do more than describe how people might feel under different circumstances. The argument is going to weigh in on what border policy should be. The second paragraph confirms this sense as it builds up to the still vague sentence, " Surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions."

In the last paragraph, we learn what these ways might involve. Three different claims of policy emerge:

1. "... We must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act."
2. "How can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice?" (The implication, of course, is that they cannot be.)
3. " We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help."

Which of these final claims is the overall focus? Arguments sometimes emphasize their main point in the very last sentence, in part to make it memorable. However, the end of the argument can also be a place for the author to go a little beyond their main point and suggest issues for further thought. The phrase "empathy, respect, and offers of help" sounds important, but we should note that the rest of the argument isn't about how to help migrants. However, the idea that we should respond more positively to migrants

has recurred throughout. The idea that migrants are not in the wrong--that they are not criminals--is clearly key, and so is the idea that we should change border policy accordingly.

Here is one way, then, to combine those last two ideas into a summary of the overall claim of the argument:

→ Border policy should not criminalize undocumented immigrants.

Find the Author's Reasons

Once we know what the main point of the reading is, we can ask ourselves what reasons the author gives. We can go through our annotations to look at the other claims and see how some may be used as reasons for the main claim or as reasons for one of the reasons.

We can write the claims in a map and use the arrows to show which claim works as a reason supporting which other claim. Each claim moves our mind from one idea to the next in the direction the writer wants it to go. The claim farthest to the right, the one that the others point toward, is the main point. Such maps might take a few different forms, such as these:

Reason → Claim

Reason A → Reason B → Claim

Reason A → Claim
Reason B ↗

How can we tell where to put each claim on the map and where to point the arrows? It can help to remember that particular words and phrases in academic and professional writing basically act as arrows. They signal that one idea is supposed to lead to another. Here are some such phrases:

- Because_____, _____.
- Because of this, _____.
- If_____, then _____.
- Since_____, _____.
- For this reason,_____.
- We can conclude_____.
- Therefore, _____.
- So_____.
- Consequently, _____.
- As a result, _____.
- Hence_____.
- Thus_____.
- It follows that _____.

For example, in the above argument, “If_____, then _____.” connects two claims in the following sentence:

“If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act.”

Look for Counterarguments

Very often, as we read an argument we will find not just what the author thinks and believes, but the author’s description of other people’s opposing arguments as well. An argument is part of an ongoing broader conversation about the subject, and the writer can remind us of what they are responding to. So as we read we can look for and mark these counterarguments.

In a complex text it can be easy to miss that a particular point is actually not one that the writer agrees with--they may be bringing it up in order to shoot it down. We can look out for particular phrases that are often used in academic writing to signal that the writer is switching sides temporarily and describing an idea that goes against the argument.

Very often the way the author will both signal to us that they are introducing the counterargument and signal their attitude toward it. They will convey the degree to which they disagree and the respect or contempt they feel for this opposing view.

Attitude to the Counterargument	**Phrases that Signal a Counterargument**

Negative : The writer thinks the counterargument is completely wrong.	• It is a popular misconception that_____. • Some have fallen for the idea that_____. • Many people mistakenly believe that_____.
Neutral : The writer is about to describe a counterargument without giving their opinion yet.	• Many people think _____. • Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____. • Some might disagree, claiming that _____. • Of course, many have claimed that _____. • Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____. • Some will object that _____. • Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____. • One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____. Note that these neutral examples don't tell us whether the writer thinks the counterargument has any validity. Usually, the writer will want to follow them with a sentence that does reveal their opinion.
Positive : The writer sees some merit in the counterargument. They agree with it even though it hurts their argument. This is called **concession**.	• It is true that _____. • I do concede_____. • We should grant that_____. • We must admit that_____. • I acknowledge that _____. • X has a point that _____. • Admittedly, _____. • Of course, _____. • To be sure, _____. • There may be something to the idea that _____.

In the border argument example, the writer never directly mentions other writers who disagree. Instead, they signal with the phrase "I admit" that they are going to summarize a valid point which goes against their own main argument:

I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk.

Look For the Author's Persuasive Response to the Counterarguments

After a writer summarizes another perspective, they will signal that they are switching back to their own perspective. If they have not already given a hint about their attitude to the other side, they will have to make their response clear now. Do they see the counterargument as completely wrong-headed, or as having some merit?

If the writer completely disagrees with the counterargument, they will follow up their description of it by pointing out its flaws. This direct rebuttal will bring the readers back to the writer's side. If they have just conceded a point, they will now emphasize the reason why their own argument still holds. The more the writer has credited the counterargument, the more they will need to explain why readers shouldn't accept it, at least not completely. Below are some phrases which can point toward the problem or limitation of the counterargument.

Attitude to the Counterargument	**Phrases that Signal a Response to a Counterargument**
If the writer considers the counterargument totally wrong:	• This idea misses the fact that _____. • I disagree because _____. • This depends on the assumption that _____ which is incorrect because _____. • This argument overlooks _____. • This argument contradicts itself _____. • This is mistaken because _____.

If the writer partly agrees with the counterargument:	• It is true that _____, but_____. • I do concede_____, and yet_____. • We should grant that_____, but we must still acknowledge that _____. • We can admit that_____ and still believe that _____.. • I acknowledge that _____, and yet we should nevertheless recognize that _____. • Critics have a point that _____; however it is more important that we focus on _____. • Admittedly, _____. However, _____. • Of course, _____, but I still insist that_____.. • To be sure, _____; but _____. • There may be something to the idea that _____, and yet _____.

In the border argument example, the writer concedes that the counterargument does have merit: "I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk." Immediately, the writer responds, "But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions." The word “but” signals the transition from concession back to the writer's own side. In the map, we can put the rebuttal below the counterargument and use the arrow to show it supporting the main claim.

Take Note of the Argument's Limitations

If we are getting ready to summarize and respond to an argument, we need to notice exactly how the writer has qualified or limited what they are saying.

Often writers will strengthen their case against the counterargument by taking a step back and limiting what they are claiming. They might make an exception for a particular case which they can’t support. Or they might clarify that their claim only applies to a particular group or situation.

Faced with a powerful counterargument, a writer might also admit a certain degree of uncertainty about their claim as a whole. They might consider the argument worth putting forward for consideration even if they are not sure it is right.

Kinds of Limitations on Argument	Phrases Used to Limit Arguments
Expressing less than perfect certainty	• Perhaps, _____. • It is worth considering the idea that _____. • _____ may_____. • _____might_____. • _____could possibly_____. • Probably, _____. • Very likely, _____. • Almost certainly,_____.
Limiting what the argument is claiming or restricting the scope of the argument	• Few _____. • Some_____. • Many_____. • Most_____. • The vast majority of _____. • Almost all_____. • _____ unless_____. • If it is not the case that_____, then _____. • _____, except in the case that _____. • We can exclude cases where _____.

When we read arguments, we can watch for these limitations and add them to our argument map. In the case of the border argument, limitations are found throughout. We have highlighted them and commented on them below.

Argument	Notes on how the author is limiting the claims
Wouldn't We All Cross the Border?	Not limited at all--a universal "all"
All the disagreement over immigration policy I have been hearing about in the news lately reminds me that while I believe in the rule of law, I feel profoundly uncomfortable with the idea of keeping people out who are desperate to come in. Is illegal immigration actually wrong? Is it unethical to cross a border without permission?	Limits the group of immigrants we are talking about to those who are desperate. This is an argument about refugees of one kind or another, not about people who just feel they would be happier or more successful in the U.S. So maybe the author would still consider it fine to criminalize those who cross illegally because they prefer to live in the U.S. if they are not currently in dire straits.
I don't have a clear vision yet of what the right border policy would be, and I admit that completely open borders would put our security at risk. But surely there are ways to regulate the border without criminalizing people who are driven by need and good intentions.	Clarifies that some "regulation" of borders is okay. Their argument does not condemn all efforts to establish rules and consequences at the border. Again, this clarifies that this only applies to migrants with a compelling reason to cross.
If I were raising children in an impoverished third-world community plagued by violence, and if I had a chance to get my family to the U.S., I would take it. I would try to cross a border illegally so my children would get enough to eat and would have a more stable childhood and a chance at a better education and a better career. What parent would sit on their hands and tell themself, "I want to give my child a better life, but oh well. If I don't have the papers, I guess it would be wrong"?	Outlines a specific circumstance that would justify crossing illegally, implying that other circumstances might not justify it.
If most of us, under desperate circumstances, would cross the border without permission and feel no moral qualms about doing so, then we must recognize this crossing as an ethical, reasonable act. If it is ethical and reasonable, then how can either a wall or a detention center be on the side of justice? We must find a policy that treats migrants as we would want to be treated--with empathy, respect, and offers of help.	Repeats the limitation to migrants who are desperate. Note: The final sentences don't mention any limitation on which migrants we are talking about.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: How to Summarize Another Writer's Argument

4.1: Introducing the Argument and the Main Claim
4.2: Describing the Reasoning
4.3: Describing How the Author Treats Counterarguments
4.4: Describing How the Author Limits the Claim
4.5: Putting the Summary Together
4.6: Using a Summary to Launch an Opinion

Thumbnail: www.pexels.com/photo/man-in-orange-crew-neck-shirt-using-laptop-beside-two-people-2422281/

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4.1: Introducing the Argument and the Main Claim

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In Chapter 2: Reading to Figure out the Argument, we discussed strategies for understanding the reading by identifying the claims presented and mapping how they work together. Chapter 3 will focus on how to use this understanding to describe the argument in our own words. Such a description is called a summary, and it forms part of most college writing assignments. In some cases, the summary will be the entire essay. We may be given a page or word count range, which might be as short as a paragraph or as long as several pages. More frequently, the summary will be the starting point; a summary in the introduction or in the first page or two will serve to launch a discussion of our own opinion. In either case, we can use the summary strategies in this chapter to create a coherent chunk of writing that will give the reader a clear picture of the text we are analyzing.

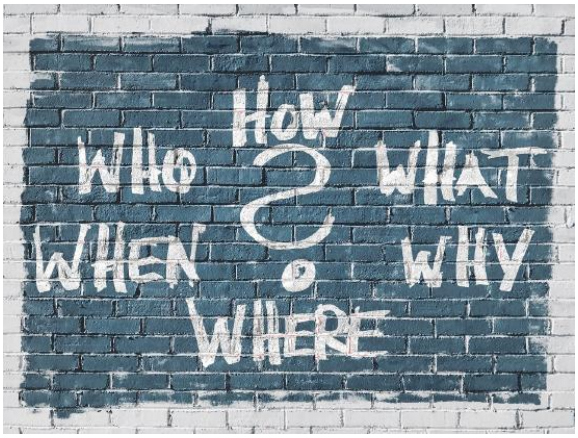


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If we have read a text and identified its claims and reasons along with any counterarguments and limits, we are in an excellent position to write a summary. If we have notes on the argument structure or an argument map, those can guide us as we write. Our notes or map will probably help us choose what to leave out and what to emphasize. They will point to the role each claim plays in the overall argument. In the summary, instead of annotations, colors, arrows, and labels like “claim” and “reason,” we will use strategic phrases to show how the parts fit together.

As we choose words to paraphrase a writer’s points, we will want to reread the text to see how strongly the writer suggests something or what attitude they take toward a counterargument. Thus the process of writing a summary helps us get even clearer about the writer’s intentions and implications than we would in making notes or mapping out the argument. Ultimately, summarizing will prepare us to comment, critique and respond more effectively, as we will see in Chapter 4, "Assessing the Strength of an Argument."

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4.2: Describing the Reasoning

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Once we have introduced the argument we will summarize and described its main claim, we will need to show how it supports this claim. How does the writer point us in the direction they want us to go? Whereas we used an arrow in the argument map to show momentum from reason to claim, we can use a phrase to signal which idea serves as a reason for which claim.

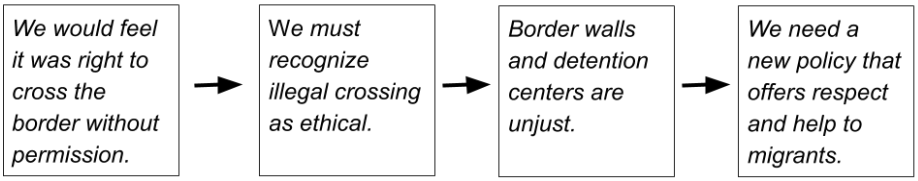


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Phrases for Introducing Reasons

- She reasons that _____.
- He explains this by_____.
- The author justifies this with_____.
- To support this perspective, the author points out that_____.
- The writer bases this claim on the idea that_____.
- They argue that_____ implies that _____ because_____.
- She argues that if _____, then _____.
- He claims that _____ necessarily means that_____ .
- She substantiates this idea by_____.
- He supports this idea by_____.
- The writer gives evidence in the form of_____.
- They back this up with_____.
- She demonstrates this by_____.
- He proves attempts to prove this by _____.
- They cite studies of _____.
- On the basis of _____, she concludes that _____.

Our border argument map shows a chain of three reasons leading to the main claim, so our summary can describe that chain.



Sample summary

In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills urges us to seek a new border policy that helps desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them. She calls for a shift toward respect and empathy, questioning the very idea that crossing illegally is wrong. She argues that any parent in a desperate position would consider it right to cross for their child’s sake; therefore, no person should condemn that action in another. Since we cannot justify our current walls and detention centers, we must get rid of them.

Practice Exercise 4.2.1

For each pair of claims and reasons below, write a paraphrase of the reason and introduce it with one of the phrases from the chapter or another phrase that serves a similar purpose.

Here's an example. Take the following claim and reason pair: “The right of free speech does not apply to speech that endangers public health. Therefore, Twitter should not allow tweets that promote medical claims that have been proven wrong.”

A description of the reason might read as follows: "The writer bases this recommendation on the idea that we do not have a free-speech right to spread ideas that harm other people’s health."

1. "Coffee jumpstarts the mind. Therefore, students should embrace coffee to help them study."
2. "Students should avoid coffee. Relying on willpower alone to study reinforces important values like responsibility and self-reliance."
3. "Students should drink black tea rather than coffee because tea has fewer side effects."

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4.3: Describing How the Author Treats Counterarguments

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If the argument we are summarizing mentions a counterargument, a summary will need to describe how the author handles it. A phrase introducing the author's treatment of the counterargument can signal whether the writer sees some merit in the counterargument or rejects it entirely. In either case, we will almost always want to follow up by describing the author's response. If the writer sees merit in the objection, we need to explain why they still maintain their position. On the other hand, if the author dismisses the counterargument, we need to show how they justify this dismissal.



If a writer rejects a counterargument entirely, we can point that out when we summarize. Photo by Anete Lusina on Pexels under the Pexels License.

Phrases to Introduce a Writer's Handling of a Counterargument

If the Author Sees Some Merit in the Counterargument

- The writer acknowledges that _____, but still insists that _____.
- They concede that _____; however they consider that _____.
- He grants the idea that _____, yet still maintains that _____.
- She admits that _____, but she points out that_____.
- The author sees merit in the idea that _____, but cannot accept_____.
- Even though he sympathizes with those who believe _____, the author emphasizes that _____.

If the Author Rejects the Counterargument Entirely

- She refutes this claim by arguing that _____.
- However, he questions the very idea that _____, observing that _____.
- She disagrees with the claim that _____ because _____.
- They challenge the idea that _____ by arguing that _____.
- He rejects the argument that_____, claiming that _____.
- She defends her position against those who claim _____ by explaining that _____.

In the case of the sample border argument, we might summarize the treatment of the counterargument thus:

> Mills acknowledges that opening the borders completely would compromise security, but she believes that we can "regulate" our borders without blocking or imprisoning migrants.

Note the choice here to quote the one word “regulate” instead of paraphrasing or using the word without quotation marks. The quotation marks draw attention to the author's original word choice and suggest there may be a problem or question about this word choice. In this case, the summary might observe that the writer does not specify what kind of regulation she means.

Practice Exercise 4.3.1

Below are two sample paragraphs in which an author describes a counterargument. For each description, decide whether the author sees some merit in the counterargument or not (see 2.6). Choose a phrase from the suggestions above to help you summarize the author’s handling of the counterargument.

1. Not everyone agrees with my celebration of coffee. Some object that ingesting substances to help us study leads to addiction. They worry that even a boost to mental functioning will ultimately hurt us because it encourages us to try to fix our mind with substances any time we feel out of sorts. This argument, however, is nothing short of paranoid. It would result in some ridiculous conclusions. By its logic, we should not drink water when we’re thirsty because we will become addicted.
2. Many feel that black tea is a better choice than coffee, arguing that it can improve performance just as well with fewer side effects. This depends on the individual, though. While black tea is worth considering, remember that it can also have side effects, and for many, it simply will not give enough of a boost to the brain.

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4.4: Describing How the Author Limits the Claim

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In the course of describing the author's claims, reasons, and counterarguments, chances are we will already have mentioned some limits or clarified which kinds of cases an author is referring to. It is worth checking, however, to make sure we haven't left out any key limitations the author has identified.



An argument may focus on particular cases and exclude others, as a frame can direct our attention to one part of a view. Photo by pine watt on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Phrases to Describe the Way a Writer Limits an Argument

- He qualifies his position by_____.
- She limits her claim by_____.
- They clarify that this only holds if _____.
- The author restricts their claim to cases where_____.
- He makes an exception for_____.

In the case of the border argument, the writer responds to the counterargument about security by clarifying that she does not advocate completely open borders. The sample summary already refers to this when it describes her desire to "regulate" those borders. In addition, when the summary paraphrases her claims and reasons, it uses the phrases "desperate" and "in a desperate position" to show how she limits the focus to migrants who are fleeing an awful situation.

Practice Exercise 4.4.1

Below are some sample claims that mention limits. Choose one of the phrases above or create another one with a similar purpose to help you summarize each claim and limit.

1. Students should embrace coffee to enhance mental functioning unless they are in the minority of people who experience severe side effects of coffee like anxiety, insomnia, tremors, acid reflux, or a compulsion to drink more and more.
2. Students shouldn't hesitate to enjoy coffee as long as they keep exercising and sleeping well enough to maintain their mental and physical health.
3. In moderation, coffee can be part of a healthy lifestyle.

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4.5: Putting the Summary Together

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How can we turn the descriptions of the claims, reasons, counterarguments, and limitations into a cohesive paragraph, page, or essay that we can turn in as our summary? The good news is that by introducing each part of the argument to show how it relates to the others, we have already provided many of the transitions we need. We can generate a first draft of the summary by simply putting them all together in order.

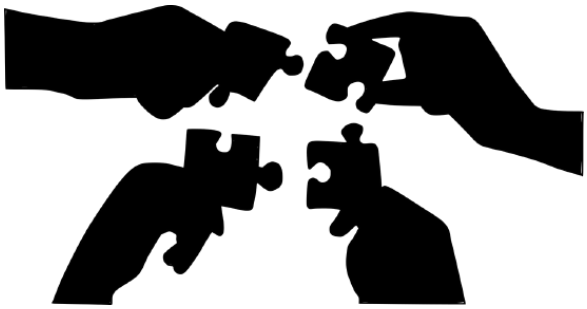


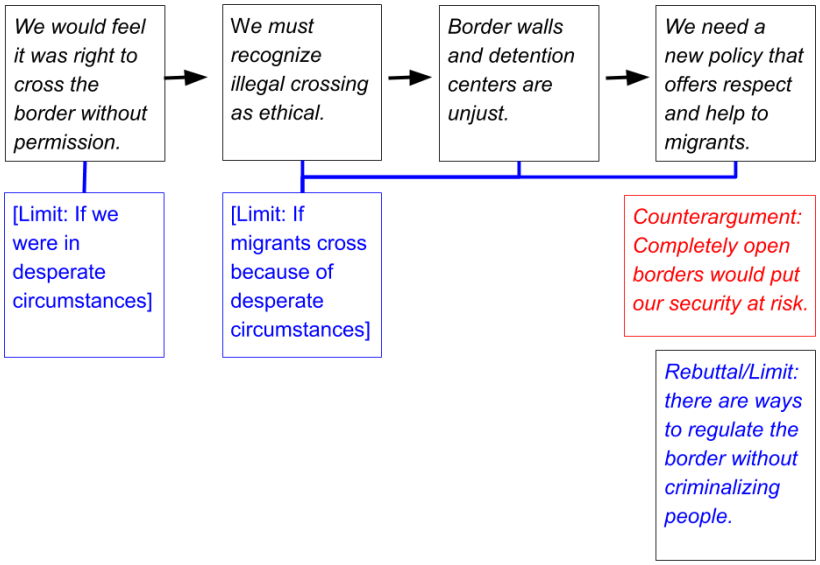
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Here is an example of a summary draft that describes the border argument:

Sample Summary

In her 2019 article “Wouldn’t We All Cross the Border?”, Anna Mills urges readers to seek a new border policy that helps desperate undocumented migrants rather than criminalizing them. She calls for a shift toward respect and empathy, questioning the very idea that crossing illegally is wrong. Mills argues that any parent in a desperate position would consider it right to cross for their child’s sake; therefore, no person should condemn that action in another. Since we cannot justify our current walls and detention centers, we must get rid of them. She acknowledges that opening the borders completely would compromise security, but believes that we can still “regulate” our borders without blocking or imprisoning migrants.

Next, we can review our border argument map to make sure that we have covered the main parts of the argument.



"Argument Map with Limits" by Anna Mills is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.
See the accessible text description of the argument map with limits.

If we are writing a longer summary of an extended argument, our map and our knowledge of the role of each part of the text will help us organize the essay into paragraphs and transition between them. For example, in a three-page summary of a twenty-five-page essay, we might spend a full paragraph on the author's description of a counterargument and yet another paragraph on the author's rebuttal to this counterargument. To open this paragraph, we could refer to our earlier list of templates for describing a response to a counterargument.

Practice Exercise 4.5.1

Summarize the argument below in a few sentences that introduce each element of the argument and its role. If you completed the exercises for the earlier sections in this chapter, you may use some of those answers to those to help you put together this paragraph.

Coffee is a blessing to students. What better way is there to jumpstart the mind and help us engage with our studies? The benefits of coffee are well known, and yet some hold back from it unnecessarily. Some feel that black tea is a better choice, arguing that it can still boost mental performance with fewer side effects. This depends on the individual. While black tea is worth considering, remember that it still comes with side effects, and for many, it simply will not give enough of a boost to the brain. For those of us who believe in the life of the mind, enhancing our brains' abilities is ultimately of more value than avoiding the occasional minor discomfort. Of course, a few people who experience severe side effects like anxiety, insomnia, or tremors should avoid coffee. For most, though, we can drink coffee in moderation and still feel healthy, as long as we exercise and sleep well. Some object to coffee because they believe that ingesting any substance to help us study leads to addiction. They worry that even a boost to mental functioning will ultimately hurt us because it encourages us to try to fix our mind with substances any time we feel out of sorts. This argument, however, is nothing short of paranoid. It would result in some ridiculous conclusions. By its logic, if we drink water when we're thirsty, we will end up addicted. If you haven't given coffee a fair try under the right circumstances, don't deprive yourself out of fear. Chances are you can do better work and enjoy it more with a moderate coffee habit. Why let life's "Aha" moments pass you by?

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4.6: Using a Summary to Launch an Opinion

Media Alternative

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In Chapters 2 and 3, we have analyzed and summarized arguments but restrained ourselves from offering our own opinions. When reading through an argument, we naturally ask ourselves whether we agree or disagree as we go. We may be writing exclamation marks or expressions of outrage in the margins, or we may be feeling uneasy because we are not sure yet what we think. Either way, we are probably impatient to find our own voice. When do we get to weigh in? Once our readers understand the original text and trust that we understand it, they are in our hands, ready to listen to our assessment. Our critique will be clearer since we have spent time thinking about the foundations of the argument and the author's purpose and meaning. The work we have done puts us in the best position to add something of our own to the conversation.



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Most college essay assignments do ask us to critically evaluate arguments, not just summarize them. To give a taste of what these kinds of assignments look like and how common they are, let's turn to courses at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a highly regarded university specializing in engineering, science, mathematics, and technology. We might not expect MIT to emphasize writing skills, but the assignments in its publicly available "Open Courseware" frequently ask students to critically evaluate arguments. Here are four examples:

1. A prompt from the MIT course "American History Since 1865," taught by professor Caley Horan, reads as follows:

> The historian Eric Foner argues that Reconstruction should be understood as an "unfinished revolution." In what ways, if any, were the American Civil War and the Reconstruction period that followed revolutionary, and for whom? What was left "unfinished" by Reconstruction? Essays should present an original argument that responds to the above prompt. This argument should be unique (of your own making) and should reflect careful and serious engagement with course materials.

2. In the economics course "The Challenge of World Poverty" at MIT, students are asked to write an essay on the following topic:

> Despite being quite poor, China currently has a savings rate that is much higher than most other countries in the world. An article by Shang-Jin Wei in VoxEU proposes one interesting reason why Chinese households tend to save so much. Do you find the article's evidence plausible? What other factors may explain why initially poor East Asian countries have saved at very high rates over the past sixty years?

3. A third prompt comes from the MIT course "Globalization: the Good, the Bad, and the In-Between":

> In his introduction to The Ornament of the World, Harold Bloom says: "...Our current multiculturalism, the blight of our universities and of our media, is a parody of the culture of Cordoba and Granada in their lost prime." What does Bloom mean? Is multiculturalism today different from the tolerance exhibited by the societies of Al-Andalus? Do you agree with him? Argue either for or against Bloom's position.

4. Finally, an experimental biology class demands the following:

> Write a brief critique (2-3 pp.) of Arbuckle, Melissa R., et al. "Development of Autoantibodies before the Clinical Onset of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus" from The New England Journal of Medicine, focusing on the illustrations.

All four of these essay prompts direct the student to focus deeply on one argument and explain it. Then the student must express an original critical response. This is in some ways similar to a movie review: a reviewer has to give some picture of what the movie is like before praising or panning it. We might not think of history, economics, and biology courses as all calling on one skill, but the student who has practice summarizing arguments and critiquing them can likely do well on all of the above assignments.

So how do we get started? In this chapter, we will discuss how to return to the structure of the argument map to search for any faults. We will look at problems with the clarity of the claims, the solidity of the reasons, and the validity of the assumptions. In the next chapter, we will talk about the options for making recommendations in response to any problems we find.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Adding to the Conversation with Research Papers

5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing
5.2: The Process of Writing a Research Paper
5.3: Developing a Research Proposal
5.4: Strategies for Gathering Information
5.5: Evaluating and Working with Sources
5.6: Reading and Note Taking for Research Papers
5.7: Critical Thinking and Research Applications
5.8: Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper
5.9: Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper
5.10: Key Takeaways

Note

Overview of Chapter 5

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5.1: The Purpose of Research Writing



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Research Writing as Conversation

Writing and reading are both social processes though they may take place asynchronously, or not at the same time. Texts are created to be read by others, and in creating those texts, writers should be aware of not only their personal assumptions, biases, and tastes, but also those of their readers. Writing, just like speaking, therefore, is an interactive process. It is a conversation, a meeting of minds, during which ideas are exchanged, debates and discussions take place and, consensus is reached. You may be familiar with the famous quote by the 20th century rhetorician Kenneth Burke, who compared writing to a conversation at a social event. In his 1974 book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke writes,

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him, another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment of gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress (110-111).

This passage by Burke is extremely popular among writers because it captures the interactive nature of writing so precisely. Reading Burke's words carefully, we will notice that the interaction between readers and writers is continuous. A writer always enters a conversation in progress. In order to participate in the discussion, just like in real life, you need to know what your the other people in the conversation have been talking about. So you listen (read). Once you feel you have the drift of the conversation, you say (write) something. Your text is read by others who respond to your ideas, stories, and arguments with their own. This interaction never ends!



Figure: by Alexis Brown on Unsplash

This continuing conversation is especially true in research, in which -- while reading and participating in the larger dialog of a field -- a researcher finds what the latest focuses are and what needs to be researched next to move the field or topic research forward as a whole. Now, as an undergraduate student, you are not necessarily going to conduct cutting-edge primary research to move your field forward. However, practicing research provides you the opportunity to find out the latest in a field you might be interested, as well as learn more about a subject or the world generally. It's also possible for you to conduct some primary research -- research you collect yourself -- to learn the proper methods of doing so, and practicing getting yourself into the conversation.

To write well, it is important to listen carefully and understand the conversations that are going on around you. Writers who are able to listen to these conversations and pick up important topics, themes, and arguments are generally more effective at reaching and impressing their audiences. It is also important to treat research, writing, and every occasion for these activities as opportunities to participate in the on-going conversation of people interested in the same topics and questions that interest you.

Our knowledge about our world is shaped by the best and most up-to-date theories available to them. Sometimes these theories can be experimentally tested and proven, and sometimes, when obtaining such proof is impossible, they are based on consensus reached as a result of conversation and debate. Even the theories and knowledge that can be experimentally tested (for example in sciences) do not become accepted knowledge until most members of the scientific community accept them. Other members of this community will help them test their theories and hypotheses; give them feedback on their writing and experimental methods (peer review); and keep them searching for the best answers to their questions. As Burke says in his famous passage, the interaction between the members of intellectual communities never ends. No piece of writing, no argument, no theory or discover is ever final. Instead, they all are subject to discussion, questioning, and improvement. Case in point, Einstein's theories -- and the implications of his theories -- are still being researched and tested to this day.



Figure: by Ree on Pexels

A simple but useful example of this process is the evolution of humankind’s understanding of their planet Earth and its place in the universe. As you may know, in Medieval Europe, the prevailing theory was that the Earth was the center of the universe and that all other planets and the Sun rotated around it. This theory was the result of the Church’s teachings, and thinkers who disagreed with it were pronounced heretics and often burned. In 1543, astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus argued that the Sun was at the center of the solar system and that all planets of the system rotate around the Sun. Later, Galileo experimentally proved Copernicus’ theory with the help of a telescope. Of course, the Earth did not begin to rotate around the Sun with this discovery; it always had. Yet, Kopernikus’ and Galileo’s theories of the universe went against the Catholic Church’s teachings at the time, which dominated the social discourse of Medieval Europe. The directors of the Inquisition did not engage in debate with the two scientists. Instead, Copernicus was executed for his views, and Galileo was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life for his views.

Although in the modern world, dissenting thinkers are unlikely to suffer such harsh punishment, the examples of Kopernikus and Galileo teach us two valuable lessons about the social nature of knowledge. First, Both Kopernikus and Galileo tried to improve on an existing theory of the universe that placed our planet at the center. They did not work from nothing; rather, they used beliefs that already existed in their society and tried to modify and disprove those beliefs. Time and later scientific research proved that they were right. Secondly, even after Galileo was able to prove the structure of the solar system experimentally, his theory did not become widely accepted until the majority of people in society accepted it. Therefore, new findings do not become accepted knowledge until they penetrate the fabric of social discourse and until enough people accept them as true.

Applying the Process Approach to Research Writing

The generic research paper assignment that most of us have been given in school often requires us to come up with a thesis, or position on the subject of our research before we begin researching. The crudest example of this approach goes something like this: a student writer is asked to "defend" a position he or she strongly believes in and to "support" that position with researched evidence. The assumption here is that the writer knows exactly what he she wants to say before the composing process begins. It is easy to see that, in this case, the purpose of research is to find the kinds of sources, proofs, and theories that confirm the writer's existing opinion. Thus, the definition of the term "research" itself is changed and searching for answers is replaced with a quick fix of facts, statistics, and quotes.

Suppose, for example, that you have been assigned to write a researched argument about the death penalty. Suppose also that you are against the death penalty and that, in your paper, you will try to "prove" that killing someone as a means of administering justice is morally wrong. By the way, I think that arguing for or against the death penalty, abortion rights, and other similar controversial subject in a research project is very difficult because most people, including you, the writer, have set views on each of these subjects that cannot be changed. But, we will use the example of the death penalty argument anyway because it keeps popping up in traditional research papers.

Armed with the belief that death penalty is wrong, you go to the library or browse the Internet looking for "research" to support your thesis. Of course, because you already have your thesis, it is very tempting to look for and use only those sources that agree with you and to discard or overlook the others. If you are lucky, you find enough such sources and construct a paper that argues for the abolition of the death penalty. Ask yourself the following question, though: what have you found out or investigated during your research? Have you discovered new theories, opinions, or aspects of your subject? Did anything surprise you, intrigue you, or make you look further? If you answered "no" to these questions, you did not fulfill the purpose of true research, which is to explore, to discover, and to investigate.



Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

The purpose of research is not to look for proofs that would fit the author's pre-existing theories, but to learn about the subject of the investigation as much as possible and then form those theories, opinions, and arguments on the basis of this newly found knowledge and understanding. And what if there is no data that prove your theory? What if, after hours and days of searching, you realize that there is nothing out there that would allow you to make the claim that you wanted to make? Most likely, this will lead to frustration, a change of the paper's topic, and having to start all over again. Not only will this inconvenience you by making you race against the clock to meat the deadline and do lots more busywork than necessary, but it will also be a waste of time because you will not learn anything new. Even if you manage to create a neat and efficient paper, it will be false research, simply jumping through hoops in order to fulfill another meaningless school assignment.

So, should you begin every research project as a disinterested individual without opinions, ideas, and beliefs? Of course, not! There is nothing wrong about having opinions, ideas, and beliefs about your subject before beginning the research process. Good researchers and writers are passionate about their work and want to share their passion with the world. Moreover, pre-existing knowledge can be a powerful research-starter. But what separates a true researcher from someone who simply looks for "proofs" for a pre-fabricated thesis is that a true researcher is willing to question those pre-existing beliefs and to take his or her understanding of the research topic well beyond what he or she knew at the outset. Speaking in terms of the process theory of writing, a good researcher and writer is willing to create new meaning, a new understanding of his or her subject through research and writing and based on the ideas and beliefs that he or she had entering the research project.

In fact, there are really two types of research papers: scientific-style research papers and literature review style research papers. We will focus on the literature review style of research paper, which is really like an extended essay, in this course. However, even a literature review depends more on the research that other people have done than does a regular essay and requires that you go into your topic with an open mind.

Reasons for Research



Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

When you perform research, you are essentially trying to solve a mystery—you want to know how something works or why something happened. In other words, you want to answer a question that you (and other people) have about the world. This is one of the most basic reasons for performing research.

But the research process does not end when you have solved your mystery. Imagine what would happen if a detective collected enough evidence to solve a criminal case, but she never shared her solution with the authorities. Presenting what you have learned from research can be just as important as performing the research. Research results can be presented in a variety of ways, but one of the most popular—and effective—presentation forms is the research paper. A research paper presents an original thesis, or purpose statement, about a topic and develops that thesis with information gathered from a variety of sources.

If you are curious about the possibility of life on Mars, for example, you might choose to research the topic. What will you do, though, when your research is complete? You will need a way to put your thoughts together in a logical, coherent manner. You may want to use the facts you have learned to create a narrative or to support an argument. And you may want to show the results of your research to your friends, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines and journals. Writing a research paper is an ideal way to organize thoughts, craft narratives, or make arguments based on research, as well as share your newfound knowledge with the world.

Research Writing at Work

According to Greta Solomon of Forbes.com, "knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, or learning about challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. You may even need to create a written report of your findings. And because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally. Research shows that those with better research and writing skills have a higher career trajectory and are more likely to succeed."

Writing at Work

Take a few minutes to think about each of the following careers. How might each of these professionals use researching and research writing skills on the job?

- Medical laboratory technician
- Small business owner
- Information technology professional
- Financial analyst

? Exercise 1

What Might You Research at Work?

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

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5.2: The Process of Writing a Research Paper

Process of Writing a Research Paper

The process of writing a research paper can be a journey, one that can be difficult at times and perhaps overwhelming. But breaking down the process into parts can make it feel manageable. The process of integrated reading and writing discussed earlier in this book is amplified in a research paper. The recursiveness of the reading-writing process is also amplified, meaning that you may have to go back and forth more between reading and writing, and the order in which you do your work may be even less linear. This, combined with the generally larger scope of the research paper, is what can make research papers feel a little overwhelming. Below, you will find a general order in which the process of the research paper occurs along with some strategies to help you. The main piece of advice any instructor can give you is: Do not put off the work. The sooner you begin your exploration, research, and writing, the better. The next three general pieces of advice are to:

- Create a research question that begins with the word "why" or "how" to guide you.
- Avoid getting bogged down in the research or working with sources that don't really relate to your question.
- Annotate while you read, and as soon as you begin writing down ideas from others in a document, be sure to also write down where the thought, idea, or quote came from.

The General Process

Determine your General Topic and Evaluate What You Know about It

As you may recall, to narrow the focus of your topic, you may try free writing exercises, such as brainstorming. You may also need to ask a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research. You may use your research question to create a research proposal (some instructors require this). See the next session to learn more about research proposals.

Plan and Schedule

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your research and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches.



Figure: by Plush Design Studio on Pexels

Each step of a research project requires time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Think about *how* you will complete each step and what project resources you will use. Resources may include anything from library databases and word-processing software to interview subjects and writing tutors.

To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, conducting research involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

In this chapter, we will follow a student named Miguel, who is studying health care administration, as he prepares a research paper. While observing Miguel's process, you will also plan, research, and draft your own research paper. As an example of creating a plan, Miguel had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. Miguel chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track.

During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule. Always start from the time your project is due. If you have a smart phone with a task list in which you can add calendar deadlines and alarms, use that too! Decide how much time each part of the process is likely to take (and maybe multiply that amount of time by 1.5 or 2 times to get a realistic amount of time). Then schedule a deadline based on that amount of time on your calendar for each task, working backward from the due date.

Review Miguel's schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Miguel planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.

Miguel's Research Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes →	2 →
3 →	4 →	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes →	7 →	8 Write outline	9 →
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft →	13 →	14 →	15 Off -- Trip to NYC	16 Off -- Trip to NYC
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft →	22 →	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

? Exercise 1

Create your own research schedule -- just as Miguel has -- but base it on your own deadlines and what you need to do.

✔ Writing at Work

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a

shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

Stay Organized

Although setting up a schedule is easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions. Organizational tools—calendars, checklists, note cards, software, and so forth—can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and your resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Both personal and workplace e-mail systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features.

Organize project documents in a binder or electronic folder, and label project documents and folders clearly. Use note cards or an electronic document to record bibliographical information for each source you plan to use in your paper. Tracking this information throughout the research process can save you hours of time when you create your references page.

Exercise 2

Revisit the schedule created in Exercise 1. Transfer it into a format that will help you stay on track from day to day. You may wish to input it into your smartphone, write it in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or have you email account send you daily reminders. Consider setting up a buddy system with a classmate that will help you both stay on track.

Identify Challenges

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject matter expert on your topic, but she calls to reschedule your meeting. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant.

These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your local library, it might be available through interlibrary loan, which usually takes a few days for the library staff to process. Alternatively, you might locate another, equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a take-charge attitude. Take a minute each day to save a backup copy of your work on a portable hard drive. Maintain detailed note cards and source cards as you conduct research—doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor for help, or make an appointment with a writing tutor.

? Exercise 3

Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

✔ Writing at Work

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

Conduct Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews.Your sources will include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, and historical documents are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or journal articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you will take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You will also evaluate the reliability of each source you find. See more about conducting research in "Evaluating and Working with Sources."

Using appropriate key words, start searching academic databases for scholarly articles about your topic. Try to look for sources from multiple perspectives, source types, and cultures. Print out or keep in a special electronic folder all of the articles you are considering.

Some Exercises or Tips to Follow while You Read

Read and annotate your articles, one at a time. At this time, also do the following for each of your readings:

- As themes or categories appear in what you are reading, assign a colored sticky note to each theme/category. As you read each article, use that color of sticky note to identify the theme wherever it appears in your reading. Note that each theme or category may not appear in all of your articles. However, each article may cover more than one theme. Annotate each article while you read with your thoughts, ideas, and reactions. Also annotate for understanding and main ideas.
- Begin your annotated bibliography if your instructor requires you to write one. Even if your instructor doesn't, creating an annotated bibliography can be a useful step for you to start to organize what you are reading in your mind. For each source, write down the complete MLA citation (in correct format), summarize the article in your own words, critique it (is the article good or not – why?), and explain how you could use it in your research paper. Writing an annotated bibliography takes time, but it is the first step in synthesizing and really thinking about how your sources work together.
- As you read through your articles, you may find that what you read raises more questions for you. This means you may go out and find some more articles, even some that weren't on your initial annotated bibliography. You may find that what you are reading doesn't seem relevant after all (although reading abstracts can help avoid this problem) so you may end up not including some articles you initially thought you would. Sometimes you may find that you need more information in some area or you may want to see if others agree with the original author. Or you may want to find out more about something the author wrote about. This is the time to check the list of citations at the end of the article. You can generally find more to read about the topic in that list although keep in mind those sources will be older than what you originally read.

Organize your Research and Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it helps to answer your research question. You may decide to conduct additional research to ensure that your question is answered thoroughly.

To help organize all of these ideas, begin a word processing document with a section for each theme/category you identified while you were reading. In each theme/section, start writing down your significant annotations you wrote down while reading. Also, be sure to write down the last name of the author and page number of the source you are working with as you do this. Thinking about PIE paragraph development (see "Strategies for Paragraph Development"), you are beginning to write down some of the E(xplanation) and I(nformation) for your research paper.

? Exercise 4 5.2.1

You may have created a mind map when brainstorming your research paper. If you did, return to that mind map and edit it by adding any new themes or topics you read about that you didn't think of before. Rearrange the mind map so that the connections represent how the topics relate to each other.

If you didn't create a mind map before -- and you are a visual thinker -- create one now. Write down each theme and think about how they relate to each other. Keep subtopic that relate close together on the mind map and keep those ideas that are less closely related farther apart. Then, you might write down the authors of each article underneath the topic(s)/theme(s) they discuss in their work. This way, each section of your research paper can be visually grouped before you write about one section (or mind map bubble) at a time. Topics/themes that are close together in your mind map can appear in close proximity in your paper also.

Draft Your Paper

Now that you've done some initial organizing, you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your research question. See "Creating a Rough Draft of a Research Paper" to see an explanation of the form and structure of a literature review research paper.

When you cite your reference sources, it is important to both paraphrase well (see "Working with Sources Part 1") and pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, or the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. You must cite your source even when you paraphrase. In fact, much higher level research writing in fields other than the humanities involves mostly paraphrasing, not incorporating quotations, so learning to paraphrase well is an invaluable skill that you should try to master. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Once you have finished your reading and note taking, go to your document in which you started to organize your notes. Go through each section, re-read your notes, and start coming up with some main ideas for each section and or paragraph that help lead to an answer to your research question. Then make sure each paragraph and section has a point, supporting information, and explanation/analysis (see PIE in "Strategies for Paragraph Development"). Try to work with one section at a time. You can develop your explanation by comparing different points of view on a subtopic (although x shows this, the results from x's study show this….), examining the nuances about a topic (i.e., this is similar, except…), discussing the implications of the ideas (looking at it from this perspective can mean…., this can help us by….), and/or critiquing the strength or weakness of some research over others (see sentence stems). Decide where you need more support and see if you can find it. But be sure to connect your research to an overall answer to your research question (what your thesis will eventually be). See what you can add to the analysis in each paragraph. At this point, you should have a general answer to your research question. This general answer is your thesis. Congratulations! You are now most of the way through your journey. See "Structure of the Research Paper" in "Creating a Rough Draft of a Research Paper" to see where to include your thesis.

Hint:

When you can't think of a word, think of the best word you can and then put question marks around it so you can revisit it later. Don't let not being able to think of the write word keep you form getting your other thoughts down.

Revise and Edit



Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

Revising and polishing your paper is a multi-step process involving obtaining feedback and figuring out areas that might have holes or how to expand your explanation and possibly reorganizing some of your information. These are higher order concerns (HOCS), and they should be dealt with before you turn your attention to lower order concerns (LOCS) involving words choice, phrasing, checking your citations, and proofreading. When dealing with HOCS, you might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper flows into the next logically and naturally. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone. Pay special attention to this where you incorporate quotations and discuss other people's writing (see "Evaluating and Working with Sources," later in this chapter).

You may have already draft an introduction to get yourself writing, or you may have put that off. Either way, it's time to think about your research question and your audience. Think about what your audience will already know about your topic and provide context accordingly for your audience, in your thesis, ending at your research question. This may require to revise your introduction if

you've already drafted one. Remember from the beginning of the chapter that research is a conversation, and since someone else reading your paper would feel like they would be entering a conversation without any context if you jump right into your topic, you need to provide the context for them to enter the conversation with you. That is the purpose of the introduction.

Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. If you used the question mark trick to mark places where you wanted to review your word choice, now is the time to go back and search for those question marks. Read your essay from the end to the beginning (looking for those question marks), or use the "search" or "find" key in your word processing program, and make any changes needed in word choice and sentence structure. Then proofread according to the tips in Section 7.5, "Proofreading." Do be careful to check all quotes against the original to make sure they are accurate (don't skip over them when proofreading), and make sure no citations are missing. Finally, make sure your final Works Cited page reflects the sources you actually used in your paper. If you got rid of some during the research process, remove them from the Works Cited list. Conversely, if you added some, add them to your Works Cited page. When you complete this final step -- hopefully not at 3 a.m. the morning before your paper is due -- you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper you can be proud of!

Contributors

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5.3: Developing a Research Proposal

Developing a Research Proposal

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although conducting and writing about research is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper. The steps to develop a good research proposal are to choose a topic; narrow it down to a specific aspect about the topic, to a "how" or "why" research question and any sub-questions; and to write a proposal that explains why you want to explore this question and how you intend to go about conducting your research to answer your research question. Think about a proposal as getting the "go-ahead" from your instructor to start your research. Your instructor wants to ensure that the task you set for yourself is manageable, and the proposal helps them determine that.

Writing at Work

Many occasions arise in the workplace to write a proposal. You may have a new idea for a process or to save money. You may think that your company should focus its marketing efforts on a new target market. You may own your own business and need to approach a bank for a loan. All of these situations require proposal writing. They may come in different forms and include different details from a research proposal, but the basic elements of explaining your idea in order to get permission to continue and obtain the resources you need remain. "Elevator pitches" (getting your idea across to your audience in the length of an elevator ride) are the most extreme, verbal version of a proposal.

Choosing a Topic

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that interests you is also crucial. You instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask that you develop a topic on your own. In either case, try to identify topics that genuinely interest you. There may very well be more than one.



Figure: by Pixabay on Pexels

After identifying potential topic ideas, you will need to evaluate your ideas and choose one topic to pursue. Will you be able to find enough information about the topic? Can you develop a paper about this topic that presents and supports your original ideas? Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify it so it is more manageable? You will ask these questions during this preliminary phase of the research process.

Identifying Potential Topics

Sometimes, your instructor may provide a list of suggested topics. If so, you may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. It is important to know how to narrow down your ideas into a concise, manageable question. You

may also use the list as a starting point to help you identify additional, related topics. Discussing your ideas with your instructor or a tutor will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment.

Miguel was assigned to write a research paper on health and the media for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Miguel had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed a list of possibilities.

Tip

If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities. Identify reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue.

Possible Topics

1. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
2. Sexual education programs
3. Hollywood and eating disorders
4. Americans' access to public health information
5. Media portrayal of health care reform bill
6. Depictions of drugs on television
7. The effect of the Internet on mental health
8. Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
9. Fear of pandemics (bird flu, HINI, SARS)
10. Electronic entertainment and obesity
11. Advertisements for prescription drugs
12. Public education and disease prevention

Exercise 1

Exercise 1

Set a time for five minutes. Use brainstorming (listing) or idea mapping (bubbled, interconnecting topics) to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Do you closely follow the media coverage of a particular website, such as Twitter? Would you like ot learn more about a certain industry such as online dating? Are you interested in how social networking can influence politics or marketing? Which social networking sites to you and your friends use? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

Exercise 2

Answer the following questions to help you figure out and narrow down your topic, especially if your instructor has not provided you with a list of topics.

1. What topics relate to what you've studied this semester? If you are a visual learner/thinker, try doing this in mind map form.2.

2. What are the different academic domains that are related to this topic (for example, history, economics, business, sociology, biology, health, philosophy, the environment/ecology)?

3. What do you wonder about in relation to this topic?

4. How does what you wonder about relate to business and society?

5. Based on the above, write down three potential research questions. Each question should begin with the word "why" or "how."

Example of a Topic Exploration Mind Map

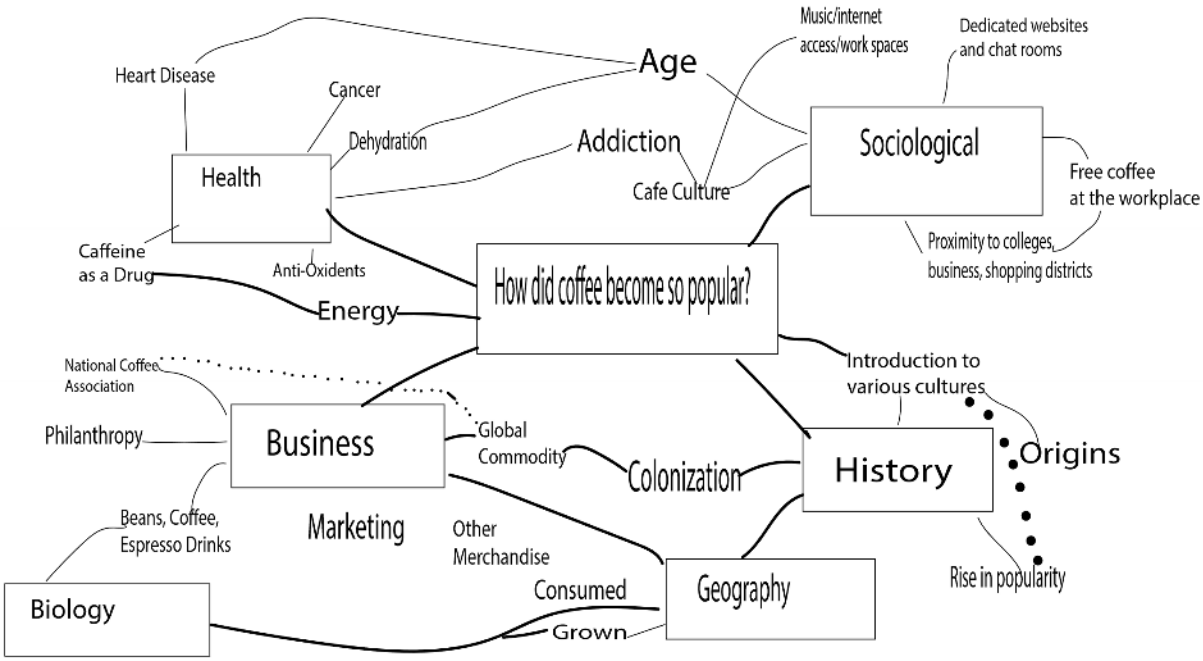


Figure: created by authors.

Narrowing Your Topic

Once you have a list of potential topics, you will need to choose one as the focus of your essay. You will also need to narrow your topic. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the pros and cons of sexual education in kids' television programs or the physical effects of the Keto diet, are specific enough to write about without being too narrow to sustain an entire research paper.

A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. Narrowing your focus is essential to making your topic manageable. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing, conduct preliminary research, and discuss both the topic and the research with others.

Exploring Your Topic in Writing

"How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?" In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through freewriting and/or the KWL+ activity below. Simply taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles.

Exercise 3

Free write one-half to one page about what you know about the topic, as well as what you would like to know. Remember that free writes don't need to be organized or take any particular form. It is just a matter of putting some thoughts on paper.

Miguel knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used free writing to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Here are his ideas.

> Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don't think the media does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest "miracle food." One week it's acai berries, the next week it's green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don't know how anyone is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there's so much confusing,

contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.

Exercise 4

*Complete the **K** and **W** portions of the following "KWL+ Chart" for your topic. In a "KWL+ Chart," **K** stands for what you already **K**now about the topic. **W** stands for what you **W**ant to know; **L** stands for what you **L**earned (having gone through the research project or having read a particular paper). "+" stands for what you **still** want to know after having finished reading a particular paper or having finished your project.*Add exercises text here

KWL+ Chart			
K What I **K**now about my topic	**W** What I **W**ant to learn about my topic	**L** What I **L**earned about my topic	+ What I **still (**+) want to know about my topic

Conducting Preliminary Research

Another way writers may focus a topic is to conduct preliminary research. Like free writing, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web and browsing through newspaper and magazine articles are good ways to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic on blogs and online discussion groups. Discussing your topic with others can also inspire you. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, your friends, or your instructor.

Miguel's free writing exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of health and the media intersected with a few of his interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects.

Miguel decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

Writing at Work

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of reliable sources and take notes on your findings.

Exercise 5

Use the information from the "W" column in your KWL+ chart, as well as your free write, to guide you to read some initial research (maybe a couple of articles) about your topic. Identify some common or contrasting themes or issues in what you read.

Tip

The reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later. However, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea for your paper, be sure to check out other, more reliable sources as well to make sure the ideas is worth pursuing.

Formulating a Research Question

In forming a research question, you are setting a goal for your research. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer.

To determine your research question, review the free writing and KWL+ exercises you completed earlier. Skim through books, articles, and websites and list the questions you have. (You may wish to use the 5WH strategy to help you formulate questions. See Chapter 4.6, "Prewriting Strategies" for more information about 5WH questions.) Include simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several sub-questions that you will need to research to answer your main question.

Here are the research questions Miguel will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Miguel will need to research his sub-questions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources? (Note that this research question will work even though it can be answered with a "yes" or "no" because it combines two different topics and requires evaluation, so it cannot simply be answered with a fact. Research questions that can be answered with a fact are not true research questions.

Sub-questions:

- **Who** can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- **What** are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- **When** did low-carb diets become a “hot” topic in the media?
- **Where** do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- **Why** has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- **How** do low-carb diets work?

Tip:

Notice that Miguel's sub-questions begin with the journalism questions of "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how." While "why" and "how" are good words with which to begin your main research question, writers can use the more fact-based, journalism question words to ask sub-questions to help develop their research and find background information that your reader may need for context.

? Exercise 6

Write your main research question (that begins with "why" or "how") and at least four to five sub-questions. If you created a mind map, you may want to base some of your questions on the intersection of different bubbles in your mind map.

Creating a Research Proposal

A research proposal is a brief document—no more than one typed page—that proposes the research you would like to do, isummarizes the preliminary work you have completed, includes your proposed research question, and explains how you will go about conducting your research. This last part is especially important if you want to do any primary research, such as surveys or interviews. Your purpose in writing it is to formalize your plan for research and present it to your instructor for feedback. You will also briefly discuss the value of researching this topic.

When Miguel began drafting his research proposal, he realized that he had already created most of the pieces he needed. However, he knew he also had to explain how his research would be relevant to other future health care professionals. In addition, he wanted to form a general plan for doing the research and identifying potentially useful sources. Read Miguel’s research proposal.

Miguel Ramirez
March 28, 2011
Health care 101
Professor Habib

Research Proposal

In recent years, topics related to diet, nutrition, and weight loss have been covered extensively in the popular media. Different experts recommend various, often conflicting strategies for maintaining a healthy weight. One highly recommended approach, which forms the basis of many popular diets, is to limit consumption of carbohydrates. Yet experts disagree on the effectiveness and health benefits of this approach. What information should consumers consider when evaluating diet plans?

In my research, I will explore the claims made by proponents of the "low-carbohydrate lifestyle." My primary research question is "Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective for maintaining a healthy weight as they are portrayed to be?" My secondary research questions are:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carb diet?
- When did low-carb diets become a "hot" topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

Figure:

For this assignment, I will review general interest and scholarly articles that discuss the relationship between low-carbohydrate diets, weight loss, and long-term health outcomes.

Use this example to write your own research proposal. If you choose to be more specific about where you will look for your sources, and if you will do any primary research, indicate that in your proposal as well.

Writing at Work

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. If it involves spending money to save money, you will also want to include a proposed cost/benefit analysis in table

> form. This type of document is similar to a research proposal. Both documents define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

Contributors

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5.4: Strategies for Gathering Information

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use the information.

Of course, the technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for evaluating sources critically so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

In this section, you will locate and evaluate resources for your paper and begin taking notes. As you read, begin gathering print and electronic resources, identify at least eight to ten sources by the time you finish the chapter, and begin taking notes on your research findings.

Locating Useful Resources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research proposal included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources.

Using Primary and Secondary Sources

Knowing the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources is very important in terms of knowing how to evaluate and use sources for research papers.

Primary Sources



Figure: by RedRecords on Pexels

Primary sources are sources that are first hand. In other words, you are working with the actual data. They include:

- Data (from data gathering websites, such as the Census Bureau),
- Interviews,
- Diaries and letters, and
- Other historical documents
- Websites of government agencies and organizations that collect data.

For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. You may collect primary sources yourself, or a primary source may be the actual “data” that other people have collected. The difference between a primary and a secondary source is that -- with a primary source -- you are working with information that no one else has interpreted for you. You do that initial work yourself. You also have the chance to evaluate the quality of the data and determine if it is of high enough quality to work with. If you determine that is, primary sources are the best, most credible source to work with provided there were no problems with the way the data collection was set up (i.e., biased surveys, inconsistent collection, too small of a sample).

Secondary Sources

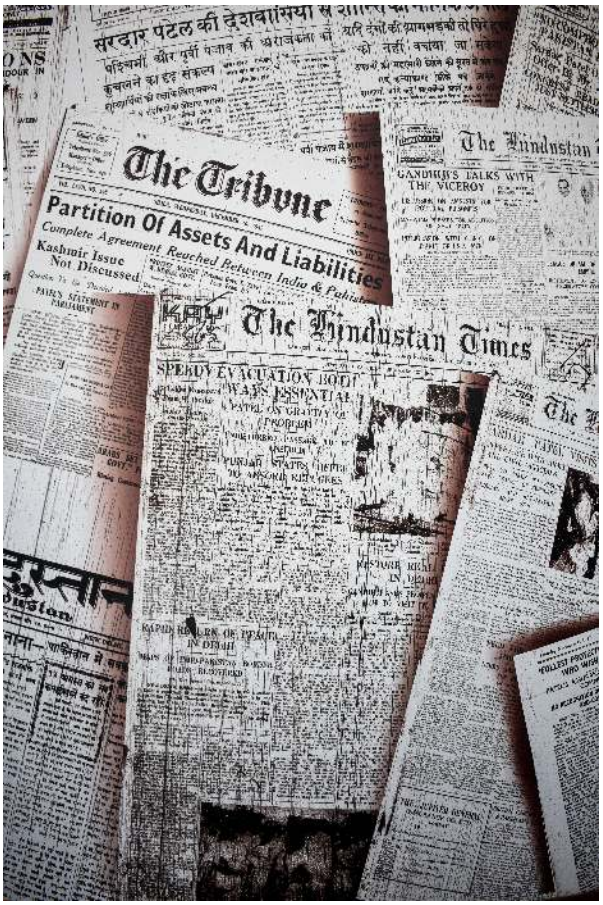


Figure: by Rishabh Sharma on Unsplash.

Secondary sources are those in which the data/information has been interpreted and edited once. Typical examples include research papers, research-based books, and some newspaper articles (those that are only dealing with primary sources, such as interviews). Secondary sources are the foundation for academic research because the whole point of research is to grow knowledge. We grow knowledge by building on other people's work most of the time. This is part of the reason we cite – because we are acknowledging whose work we are building upon. Most research papers are a combination of primary and secondary sources. Often, a writer must set up a background based on their own and others' previous work to justify their current work both theoretically and in terms of their methods (how they are going to conduct their own research). Secondary sources are reliable to the extent that:

- The interpretations the writers make are logically sound,
- The authors do not have any conflicts of interest (i.e., a study about the health benefits of wine paid for by the wine industry), and
- The data are statistically and/or historically valid and collected in an appropriate manner.

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. For example, in researching for a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information.

The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Journal and some magazine articles
- Some newspaper articles
- Biographical books
- Television documentaries
- Websites that at interpret data gathered by themselves or others (for example, the USGS website's articles about why earthquakes happen).

It's not always possible to determine if a secondary source is completely credible given that we don't usually have access to the initial data, but we should always ask certain questions about our secondary sources to make sure they are as credible as possible

(see below).

One very famous example of a non-credible secondary source was a paper, published in a very credible scientific journal, that linked autism to some of the ingredients in childhood vaccines. The result of this seemingly credible study was that many parents stopped vaccinating their children out of fear of autism. The result on society was an increase in childhood diseases, such as measles and whooping cough, that had almost been wiped out in the U.S. and elsewhere. Other scientists tried to replicate the results of the study, but they could not (validating results is also part of academic, especially scientific, inquiry). This failure to replicate the results called into question the validity of the original study. The original author and the journal recanted the study, so this relationship between vaccines and autism has now been debunked.

Tertiary Sources

Tertiary sources are those sources that have already been interpreted by two people. These sources are not nearly as reliable as primary and secondary sources because it is nearly impossible for a reader/listener to determine if the interpretation others have made is logical and accurate/appropriate. Common examples of tertiary sources are magazine articles in which an author uses a number of secondary sources or, lately, newspaper articles that cite other newspaper articles rather than an original source. Blogs are another common tertiary source, and they are rarely credible enough to include as a source for academic writing. (However, some academic researchers do have their own blogs, and if their work is generally considered credible, so are their blogs). Tertiary sources are like rumors – you have to take them with "a grain of salt." Many times, tertiary sources will also be filled with emotive language to get you to feel a certain way about the topic. This is a clue that your source may not be credible enough.

What Kind of Sources Should I Use?

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must use both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for print and electronic resources. The challenge here is to conduct your search efficiently. Writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful.

Print Resources versus Electronic Resources

These days, there really isn't much difference in how you find your resources, whether they are print or electronic. Either way, you will likely search for them digitally. The only difference is whether you read the read or watch the resource online or hold it and read a print version. Keep in mind, however, that some potentially useful sources may be available only in print form. Others may be only available electronically. The following table lists different types of resources available at public, college, and university libraries.

Table 10.4.1: Library Resources

Resource Type	Description	Example(s)
Reference works	Reference works provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In some cases, reference books may not be checked out of a library; rather, they must be read there. **Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information.**	• *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010* • *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* published by the American Psychiatric Association

Resource Type	Description	Example(s)
Nonfiction books	Nonfiction books provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.	• *The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days* • *Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes*
Periodicals and news sources	These sources are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are examples. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest while others are more specialized.	• *New York Times* • *PC Magazine* • *JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association*
Government publications	Federal, state, and local government agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.	• The *Census 2000 Profile* • *The Business Relocation Package* published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
Business and nonprofit publications	Businesses and nonprofit organizations produce publications designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. Occasionally they also collect statistics. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.	• A company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program • A news release published by the Sierra Club
Historical documents	Some libraries, particularly university libraries, hold special collection related to a particular historical event, a particular historical or literary figure, and other special topics.	• John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum • The Archer Collection of Historical Childrens' Books at J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University

Many of these resources are also widely available in electronic format. In addition to the resources noted in the table, library holdings -- especially university libraries -- may include primary texts such as historical documents, letters, and diaries.

Writing at Work

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors.

Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers

Tip

As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying solely on lightweight books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. On the other hand, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the process of researching extremely time-consuming and frustrating.

Using Periodicals, Indexes, and Databases

These days, library catalogs are almost exclusively online and integrate many sub-databases, so you can generally go to one place to locate book-length sources, magazine and journal articles, CDs, DVDs, and audio books. Generally speaking, though, they don't search the Internet, so you would need to conduct a separate search for primary sources you might want from the Internet. You can generally also find secondary sources that appear on the Internet in your library database. Always search here first, especially for journal articles, because you don't have to pay for these resources if you access them through your library whereas Google Scholar may charge more than $25.00 to access one article. To locate shorter sources, such as magazine and journal articles, you will need to use a periodical index or an online periodical database. These tools index the articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Like catalogs, they provide publication information about an article and often allow users to access a summary or even the full text of the article.

Sometimes your library database may re-direct you to the sub-database that you may need to search again to find the actual article you want. This is especially true for specialty topics. It's a good idea to copy the exact title of the article so you can paste the title into the search bar of any sub-database that you may need to access.

The table, “Commonly Used Indexes and Databases,” describes some commonly used indexes and databases to which your library's database may link.

Table 10.4.2 - Commonly Used Indexes and Databases

Resource	Format	Contents
Business Source Complete	Online	Database that archives business-related content from magazines and journals
EBSCOhost	Online	General database that provides access to articles on a wide variety of topics
MEDLINE, PubMed	Online	Databases that archive articles in medicine and health
New York Times Index	Online	Guide to articles published in the *New York Times*
ProQuest	Online	Database that archives content from newspapers, magazines, and dissertations
Psychlit, PsycINFO	Online	Databases that archive content from journals in psychology and psychiatry

Using Internet Search Engines Efficiently

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines as their first source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? Unfortunately, despite its apparent convenience, this research strategy has the following drawbacks to consider:

- **Results do not always appear in order of reliability.** The first few hits that appear in search results may include sites whose content is not always reliable, such as online encyclopedias that can be edited by any user. Because websites are created by third parties, the search engine cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- **Results may be too numerous for you to use.** The amount of information available on the web is far greater than the amount of information housed within a particular library or database. Realistically, if your web search pulls up thousands of hits, you will not be able to visit every site—and the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results.

A general web search can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful resources. To get the most out of a search engine, however, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Use multiple keywords and Boolean operators to limit

your results. Click on the Advanced Search link on the homepage to find additional options for streamlining your search. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or country.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites, which can often lead to more objective results.

Use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising. If you end up find an article and the search engine tries to charge you to access it, try searching for the article in your college or local public library, where you can probably access it for free.

Choosing Key Words

Even if you use print sources, most likely you will need to use an electronic library database to find where they are. To use a library database well, you want to be able to use "key words" that will lead you to the most relevant resources. To find print resources efficiently, first identify the major concepts and terms you will use to conduct your search—that is, your "key words." These, along with the research questions you identified, will help you find sources using any of the following methods:

- Using the library's online catalog or card catalog
- Using periodicals indexes and databases
- Consulting a reference librarian

You probably already have some keywords in mind based on your preliminary research and writing. Another way to identify useful keywords is to visit the Library of Congress's website at http://id.loc.gov/authorities. This site allows you to search for a topic and see the related subject headings used by the Library of Congress, including broader terms, narrower terms, and related terms. Other libraries use these terms to classify materials. Knowing the most-used terms will help you speed up your keyword search. Here are some additional tips for working with "key words."

- Start off with key words that are fairly specific. For instance, rather than "global warming," you might use "temperature trends" or "sea level rise."
- Check your spelling.
- If you don't get enough results from your key word search, broaden or generalize your key words.
- You also might be limiting your results too much with specific word suffixes. Try using an asterisk to tell the computer to search the root word with all the endings. For instance warm***** would find any article with "warmer" "warming" and "warm."
- If you get too many results from your search, try to be more specific about what you are searching for. Be more specific in the exact words you use.
- Try limiting the time period of the articles in your results list. Your instructor may advise that you should only use secondary sources that are less than ten years old, depending on your topic.
- Include more specific fields such as "author" or "title" rather than any part of the text.
- Use correct Boolean search terminology, such as "sea level rise" AND "Borneo," so that the results are only for sea level rise in Borneo and not elsewhere.
- Combine keywords with **AND** or **+** to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, **diet + nutrition**.
- Combine keywords with **NOT** or **–** to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for **obesity NOT childhood** locates materials on obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.
- Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, such as "**morbid obesity**."
- Use parentheses to direct the order of operations in a search string. For example, since Type II diabetes is also known as adult-onset diabetes, you could search **(Type II OR adult-onset) AND diabetes** to limit your search results to articles on this form of the disease.
- Think of synonyms for your key words and try searching for those.
- You might also break up your topic into more specific concepts and search using key words for those more specific concepts.

Exercise 1

Make a list of five types of print resources you could use to find information about your research topic. Include at least one primary source. Be as specific as possible—if you have a particular resource or type of resource in mind, describe it. Miguel used the Library of Congress site to identify general terms he could use to find resources about low-carb dieting. His search helped him identify potentially useful keywords and related topics, such as carbohydrates in human nutrition, glycemic index, and carbohydrates—metabolism. These terms helped Jorge refine his search

Tip

If you are still having trouble finding relevant sources after trying the above tips, consult a librarian to see whether you need to modify your search terms. They are happy to help you.

Exercise 2

Visit the Library of Congress's website at http://id.loc.gov/authorities and conduct searches on a few terms related to your topic.

1. Review your search results and identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you conduct your research.
2. Print out the search results or save the results to your research folder on your computer or portable storage device.

Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if it is yielding too many or too few results, you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many university librarians hold virtual office hours and are available for online chatting.

Exercise 3

Visit your library's website or consult with a reference librarian to determine what periodicals indexes or databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general news index, a specialized index for a particular subject area, or both. Search the catalog for your topic and related keywords. Print out or bookmark your search results.

1. Identify at least one to two relevant periodicals, indexes, or databases.
2. Conduct a keyword search to find potentially relevant articles on your topic.
3. Save your search results. If the index you are using provides article summaries or abstracts, read these to determine how useful the articles are likely to be.
4. Identify at least three to five articles to review more closely. If the full article is available online, set aside time to read it. If not, plan to visit our library within the next few days to locate the articles you need.

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

Sometimes an article's title may seem like it could be right for your purposes, but you aren't sure. The quickest way to decide whether you should continue to consider it (especially if it is a journal or indexed article) is to read the abstract. The abstract is a summary of the article, and it will give you a better idea of what the article is about. Do this while you are searching to avoid spending time downloading articles needlessly.

Still, at this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out/bookmarking articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

To weed through your stack of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. The table, "Tips for Skimming Books and Articles" explains how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a

book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Table 10.4.3 -- Tips for Skimming Books and Articles

Tips for Skimming Books	Tips for Skimming Articles
1. Read the dust jacket and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered. 2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered. 3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.	1. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material. 2. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars. 3. Look for keywords related to your topic. 4. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.

Other Information Sources

Interviews

With so many print and electronic media readily available, it is easy to overlook another valuable information resource: other people. Consider whether you could use a person or group as a primary source. For instance, you might interview a professor who has expertise in a particular subject, a worker within a particular industry, or a representative from a political organization. Interviews can be a great way to get firsthand information.

To get the most out of an interview, you will need to plan ahead. Contact your subject early in the research process and explain your purpose for requesting an interview. Prepare detailed, open-ended questions. Open-ended questions, rather than questions with simple yes-or-no answers, are more likely to lead to an in-depth discussion. Schedule a time to meet, and be sure to obtain your subject's permission to record the interview. Take careful notes and be ready to ask follow-up questions based on what you learn. Also ask the person you are interviewing if you may use their name in your paper (if you end up quoting them) or if they would prefer to be cited anonymously ("Reading and Note taking for Research Papers" later in this chapter).

> Tip
>
> If scheduling an in-person meeting is difficult, consider arranging a telephone or video phone call interview or asking your subject to respond to your questions via e-mail. Recognize that any of these formats takes time and effort. Be prompt and courteous, avoid going over the allotted interview time, and be flexible if your subject needs to reschedule. Always send a thank you note or email when your interview is complete.

> ✔ Writing at Work
>
> Informational interviews are a useful way to find out about an industry, figure out whether you may enjoy a particular line of work, and make contacts. It is primary research for your own career. Informational interviews can be used at any point in your career, whether you are just starting out or you are thinking about your next move. Prepare for an informational interview just as you would if you were writing a research paper. Have some background information about the industry, company, and person. Form some detailed open-ended questions. In this case, you may not want to record the interview, but just take notes on a pad of paper. Keep the interview at no more than one-half hour, and be sure to send a thank you note or email within a day of the interview.

Using Media as a Primary Source

Depending on your research question, you may want to use various media as a primary source. Social networking sites (ensure the posts are public), online chat rooms and discussion forums, videos of newscasts, blogs (web logs), vlogs (video logs), and videos on YouTube may all be primary sources of information if your research goal is to analyze a topic and how it is portrayed in the media. Be very careful to gather electronic sources that show a variety of viewpoints because it can be difficult to avoid confirmation bias (choosing support that reflects your own viewpoints) when choosing among electronic sources. Remember, also, that each primary source is one data point, and you cannot generalize (extrapolate) from just one data point. To be able to make a generalization from primary electronic data, you would need to ensure you have a large enough sample size to say something is correlated. In most cases, you won't have enough data to generalize, so you can simply bring in your observations as an additional source of information that supports other work that has already been able to make a general point about your topic.

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5.5: Evaluating and Working with Sources



Figure: Image from Pixabay

Assessing and Evaluating Sources

Critical thinking is interwoven in all steps of the research process, and one of the places you will definitely use it is when you evaluate your sources. As you researched your sources, you may have developed a good sense of which sources are going to be the most useful in supporting your research question. However, the credibility of your research paper relates directly to your sources. Are your sources themselves valid? You need to consciously evaluate your sources in order to make final choices about using them in your research essay.

The two main questions you should ask yourself when evaluating sources are the following:

1. Is this source suitable?
2. Is this source trustworthy?

Not every suitable source is trustworthy, and not every trustworthy source is suitable. In Miguel's example that follows, you'll see that the writing professor encourages Miguel to *talk* to the right sources as part of the conversation on his topic. To do this, he needs to find authors who are trustworthy *and* knowledgeable.
Miguel: If I used a university or government website on bottled water quality, would readers trust me more than if I just used a bottled water company website?
Prof: Yes. Refresh my memory. What kinds of questions do you need answers to before you can write your paper?
Miguel: Well, I need to know if bottled water is truly healthier, like the beverage companies claim. Or would I be just as well off drinking tap water?
Prof: To answer this question, you'll want to find out who's *talking* about these issues in the overall conversation (or *discourse*) about bottled water. The authors of texts aren't speaking aloud, of course, but they're making written statements that others can "listen" and "respond" to. Knowing which texts you can trust means understanding which authors you can trust.
Miguel: How do I figure that out?
Prof: It helps to know who the authors are. What they're saying. Where, when, and to whom they're saying it. To go into more depth into questions about suitability and trustworthiness of sources, consider the following.

Determining Suitability

Your task as a researcher is to determine the appropriateness of the information your source contains for your particular research project. Ask this simple question: Will this source help me answer my research questions? Will it help me learn as much as I can about my topic? Will it help me write an interesting, convincing essay for my readers?

Suitable sources:

- Contain facts/opinions that help answer your research question,
- May contain illustrations or data that help answer your research question,
- Clearly explain their information,
- Are/were written by a well known authority or expert, and
- Carefully cite the sources they used.

Unsuitable sources:

- May not offer any relevant, important information or counter-argument,

- May not contain any new information that advances your understanding of your topic,
- May be too narrow or too broad in coverage of your topic,
- May be from very general sources and not from a scholarly journal or peer-reviewed source,
- May be from a scholarly journal but be too technical or difficult for you to understand,
- May be out of date, or
- Do not cite the sources they used.

Determining Trustworthiness

To determine the trustworthiness and credibility of a source, you want to ensure that a source is current, written by an expert, accurate, and unbiased. You'll want to consider the rhetorical context of a source, including its purpose, audience, and focus.

View the following video, which clearly identifies a variety of questions to ask in order to evaluate sources.



Video 5.5.1

Evaluating Sources to Find Quality Research. **Authored by:** PCC Library. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Evaluating the credibility and validity of a resource can be very difficult, particularly when doing research using the Internet. Below are some basic guidelines to help you select reliable resources and use those to glean, or find, accurate information about a given subject.

Characteristics of Reliable Sources

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, however, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas.

Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information.

Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animal-rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

> As Miguel conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Miguel read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers' conclusions.

When using websites for research, check to see when the site was last updated. Many sites publish this information on the homepage, and some, such as news sites, are updated daily or weekly. Many nonfunctioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your professor for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable—or that the most reliable sources are not relevant. If you are finding your sources on the internet, is also

important to think about who is sponsoring the information. The URL can provide information about the origin of the resource. The following are examples of ways you can determine the type of organization that is sponsoring the content for a specific website.

Sites ending in....
.edu are usually educational institutions and generally a good source of information.
.gov are government websites and usually good sources for statistical information
.org are typically non-profit organizations often set up as a public service. Be on the lookout for political agendas and biases.

Example: If you are looking for information about gun control, then you might check .gov sites for statistics related to gun ownership, laws, etc. Sites affiliated with specific biases on gun ownership will probably be listed on .org sites (handguncontrol.org or nrahg.org).

Blogs
While interesting, these are usually not fact-based and as a general rule should not be used for conducting research.

Online magazines or journals
These articles often contain a detailed bibliography and site specific resources as evidence for claims and statistics.

Online news sources
Virtually every network and cable news station has an online site as do local affiliates. It is important to realize that while they do provide news, they are also involved in the entertainment industry and may present some information that is based in opinion and not necessarily facts.

Television/Internet video news broadcasts
When viewing video, keep in mind that if it is not from a source that can be accurately documented with origin, date, and key information like who, what, when, where, why and how, then the source may not be credible.

Source Rankings	
High Quality Sources These sources provide the most in-depth information. They are researched and written by subject matter experts and are carefully reviewed.	• Scholarly books and articles in scholarly journals • Trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as *Smithsonian Magazine* or *Nature* • Government documents, such as books, reports, and web pages • Documents posted online by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes • Textbooks and reference books, which are usually reliable but may not cover a topic in great depth
Varied-Quality Sources These sources are often useful. However, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Use them with caution.	• News stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as *Newsweek* or the Public Broadcasting Service • Popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked • Documents published by businesses and nonprofit organizations
Questionable Sources These sources should be avoided. They are often written primarily to attract a large readership or present the author's opinions and are not subject to careful review.	• Loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk radio shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms

Free online encyclopedias and wikis may seem like a great source of information. They usually appear among the first few results of a web search. They cover thousands of topics, and many articles use an informal, straightforward writing style. Unfortunately, these sites have no control system for researching, writing, and reviewing articles. Instead, they rely on a community of users to police themselves. At best, these sites can be a starting point for finding other, more trustworthy sources. Never use them as final sources.

Questions to ask yourself when determining the credibility of an academic paper/study are:

- Who funded the study?
- Are there any professional links between the author and the funder?

- Do the authors explain where the data comes from and how they obtained it?
- Who are the authors? Are they experts in their fields (i.e., what is their authority?) Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physics, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.
- What does the author's purpose seem to be?
- How recent is the source?
- Does the writing have a lot of emotionally laden words (i.e., is it not objective)?
- Does the author cite their own sources?

? Exercise 1

Choose one of your articles you've gathered for your research paper. Answer the following questions, and then write a summary explaining whether and why you believe the source is credible enough to act as one of your sources.

1. Who funded the study/article?
2. Who owns the publication? Do they have a commercial or political purpose?
3. Are there any professional links between the author and the funder?
4. Do the authors explain where the data comes from and how they obtained it?
5. Who are the authors? Are they experts in their fields?
6. What does the author's seem to be?
7. How recent is the source?
8. Does the writing have a lot of emotionally laden words, indicating it may not be objective?
9. Do the authors cite their sources

Avoiding Conspiracy Theories and Fake News

Avoiding conspiracy theories and fake news is essential for conducting credible research. The following guides have helpful resources to help you determine whether a news story you are considering is legitimate or not. The second source allows you to search and find out if a conspiracy theory or urban legend is true or not.

How to Spot Fake News (Harvard University Library)

www.snopes.com

Strategy: The CRAAP Test

One excellent tool to examine both the suitability and trustworthiness of a source is the CRAAP method, which stands for:

- **C**urrency: the timeliness of the information
- **R**elevance: the importance of the information for your needs
- **A**uthority: the source of the information
- **A**ccuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the information
- **P**urpose: the reason the information exists

The following video offers a good explanation of these points of analysis.



Video 5.5.1

Study Help: Evaluating Information.Authored by: University of South Australia. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Currency: The Timeliness of the Information

Key Question: When was the item of information published or produced?

Determining when an item of information was published or produced is an aspect of evaluating information. The date the information was published or produced tells you how current it is or how relevant it is to the topic you are researching. For example, if you were writing a research paper on the survival of passengers in car crashes, you would need the most recent information on automobile crash tests, structural strength of materials, car wreck mortality statistics, etc. If, on the other hand, you were writing a research paper on the feelings of college students about the Vietnam War during the 1960s, you would need information written in the 1960s by college students (primary sources) as well as materials written since then about college students in the 1960s (secondary sources). Key indicators of the currency of the information are:

- date of copyright
- date of publication
- date of revision or edition
- dates of sources cited
- date of patent or trademark

Relevance: The Importance of the Information for Your Needs

Key Question: How does this source contribute to my research paper?

When you read through your source, consider how the source will effectively support your argument and how you can use the source in your research essay. You should also consider whether the source provides sufficient coverage of the topic. Information sources with broad, shallow coverage mean that you need to find other sources of information to obtain adequate details about your topic. Information sources with a very narrow focus or a distinct bias mean that you need to find additional sources to obtain the information on other aspects of your topic. Some questions to consider are:

- Does the information relate to my topic, research question, or angle in my working thesis?
- Who is the source's intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (e.g., not too simple or advanced) for my needs?
- Did I look at a variety of sources before deciding to use this one?

Authority: The Source of the Information

Key Question: Is the person, organization, or institution responsible for the intellectual content of the information knowledgeable in that subject?

Determining the knowledge and expertise of the author is an important aspect of evaluating the reliability of information. Anyone can make an assertion or a statement about some thing, event, or idea, but only someone who knows or understands what that thing, event, or idea is can make a reasonably reliable assertion about it. Some external indications of expertise are:

- a formal academic degree in a subject area

- professional or work-related experience, e.g., businessmen, government agency personnel, sports figures, etc. who have expertise in their areas of work
- active involvement in a subject or organization by serious amateurs who spend substantial amounts of personal time researching and studying that subject area
- organizations, agencies, institutions, corporations with active involvement or work in a particular subject area.

HINT: Be careful of opinions stated by professionals outside of their area of work expertise.

Accuracy: The Reliability, Truthfulness, and Correctness of the Information

Key Question: How free from error is this piece of information?

Establishing the accuracy, or relative accuracy, of information is an important part of evaluating the reliability of information. It is easier to establish the accuracy of facts than it is opinions, interpretations, or ideas. The more an idea, opinion, or other piece of information varies from the accepted point of view on a particular topic, the harder it is to establish its accuracy. An important aspect of accuracy is the intellectual integrity of the item:

- Are the sources appropriately cited in the text and listed in the references?
- Are quotations cited correctly and in context? Out-of-context quotations can be misleading and sometimes completely erroneous.
- Are there exaggerations, omissions, or errors? These are difficulty to identify if you use only one source of information, so always use several different sources of information. Analyzing what different sources say about a topic is one way to determine exaggerations, omissions, and errors.

In addition to errors of fact and integrity, you need to watch for errors of logic. Errors of logic occur primarily in the presentation of conclusions, opinions, interpretations, editorials, ideas, etc. Some indications that information is accurate are:

- the same information can be found in other reliable but different sources
- the experiment can be replicated and returns the same results
- the documentation provided in support of the information is substantive
- the sources used for documentation are generally reliable
- the author of the information is known to have expertise on that subject
- the presentation is free from logical fallacies or errors
- quotations are “in context” so that the intended meaning of the information quoted is retained
- quotations, paraphrases, and summaries are correctly cited

Some indications that information may **not** be accurate are:

- facts cannot be verified or are contradicted in other sources
- sources used are known to be unreliable or highly biased
- bibliography of sources used is inadequate or non-existent
- quotations are taken out of context and given a different meaning
- presence of one or more logical fallacies
- authority cited is another part of the same organization
- inclusion of emotionally laden language

Purpose: The Reason the Information Exists

Key Question: Who is this information written for, and what is the author’s purpose?

Identifying the intended audience of the information and identifying the author’s purpose are other important aspects of evaluating information. The intended audience of an item generally determines the style of presentation, the level of technical detail, and the depth of coverage. Determining the intended audience of a particular piece of information will help you decide whether or not the information is too basic, too technical, too general, or just right for your needs. The intended audience can also indicate the potential reliability of the item because some audiences require more documentation than others. For example, items produced for scholarly or professional audiences are generally produced by experts and go through a peer review process. Items produced for the mass market frequently are not produced by experts and generally do not go through an evaluation process. Some indications of the intended audience are:

- Highly technical language, complex analysis, very sophisticated/technical tools can indicate a technical, professional, or scholarly audience.
- How-to information or current practices in “X” are frequently written by experts for practitioners in that field.

- Substantive and serious presentations of a topic with not too much technical language are generally written for the educated lay audience.
- Popular language, fairly simple presentations of a topic, with little or no analysis, can indicate a general or popular audience.
- Bibliographies, especially long bibliographies, are generally compiled by and for those doing research on that topic.

You should also consider the author's purpose. Is the information intended to inform or persuade? Does the author intend to present a bias? While it is unlikely that anything humans do is ever absolutely objective, it is important to establish that the information you intend to use is reasonably objective, or if it is not, to establish exactly what the point of view or bias is. There are times when information expressing a particular point of view or bias is useful, but you must use it consciously. You must know what the point of view is and why that point of view is important to your project.

Exercise 2

Review the steps of the CRAAP method and practice evaluating sources in **the following tutorial** from Eastern Michigan University. Be sure to complete the practice exercises at the end of the tutorial. (You may also access the tutorial and activity in a text format.

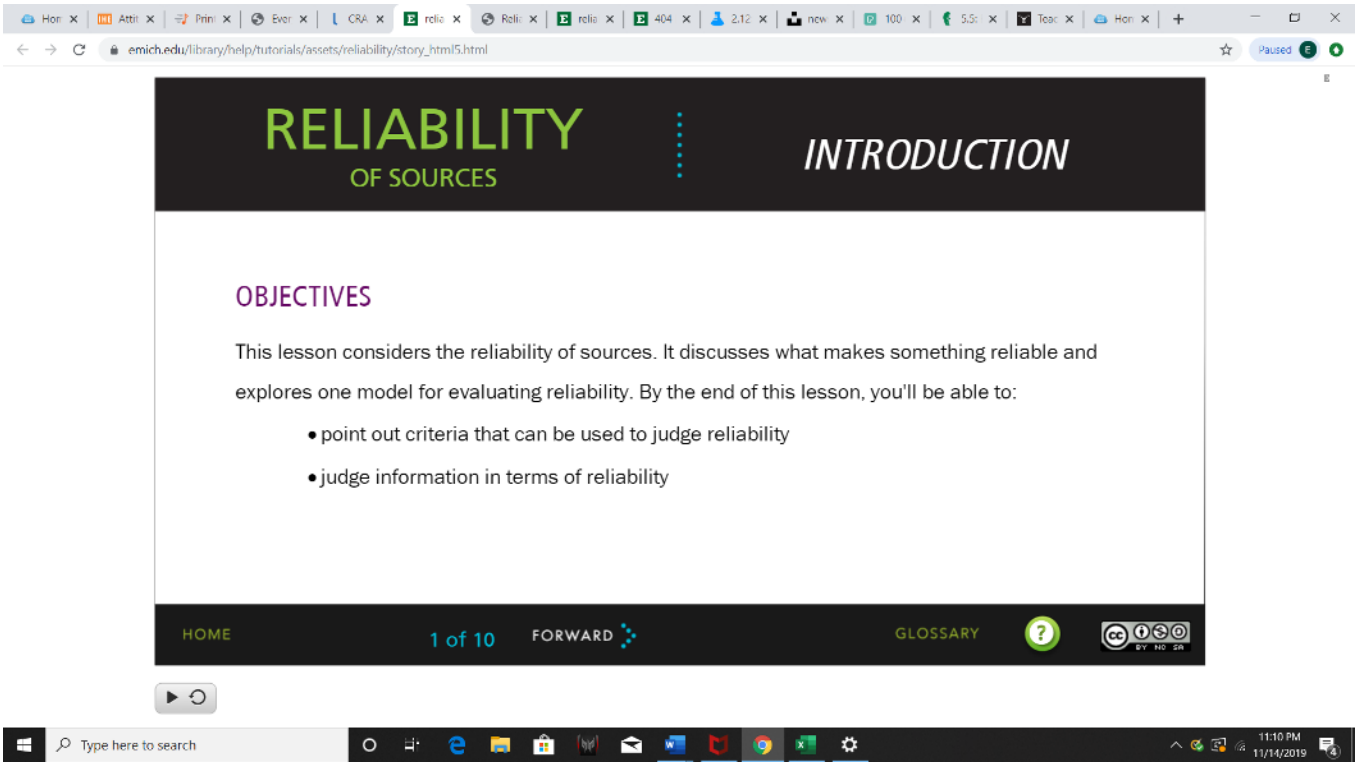


Figure: Some additional questions to keep in mind when evaluating websites follow.

Design

- Is the source professional?
- Does it seem like current design?
- Is the website user-friendly?
- What kinds of images are used?
- Is the navigation menu well-labeled?
- Are there spelling or grammar errors?
- Do the pages appear uncluttered?
- Are there ads or pop-ups on the page?
- Are links working?

Originality

- Was it reproduced? If so, from where? Type a sentence in Google to verify.
- If it was reproduced, was it done so with permission? Are a copyright and/or disclaimer included?

Keep in mind that everything is written from a particular social, cultural, and political perspective. Realize that some publications tend to be "slanted" towards a certain viewpoint. For example, the CATO Institute is known for being libertarian, while The Nation is known to lean left. Keep these slants in mind when you are researching.

? Exercise 3

Evaluate each of the sources you plan to use for your research paper by applying the questions of the CRAAP test. Summarize your findings for each of the sources. For those sources that are websites, also evaluate the design and the originality of the source.

✔ Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be used for substantial research.

Contributors

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5.6: Reading and Note Taking for Research Papers

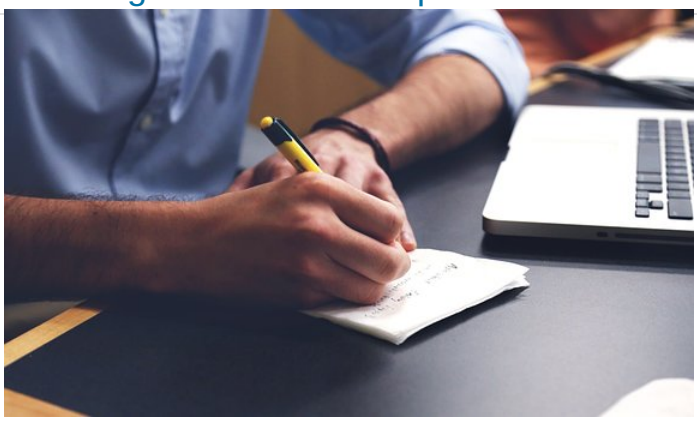


Figure: Image from Pixabay

Now that you have chosen your sources, it is time to start reading and note taking in an in-depth way.

Managing Source Information

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. What matters is that you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Keeping Track of Your Sources

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources.

As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include embedded programs for recording bibliographic information and there are a number of online programs to help you format your bibliographic entries.)

The following table, 10.6 -- "Details for Commonly Used Source Types," shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography—a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. You may wish to record information using the formatting system of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Modern Language Association (MLA), which will save a step later on. For most composition classes, professors will require MLA format.

Table 10.6 -- Details for Commonly Used Source Types

Source Type	Necessary Information
Book	Author(s), title and subtitle, publisher, city of publication, year of publication
Essay or article published in a book	Include all the information you would for any other book. Additionally, record the essay's or article's title, author(s), the pages on which it appears, and the name of the book's editor(s).
Article in a periodical	Author(s), article title, publication title, date of publication, volume and issue number, and page numbers

Source Type	Necessary Information
Online source	Author(s) (if available), article or document title, organization that sponsors the site, database name (if applicable), date of publication, optional -- check with your professor), date you accessed the site, and URL
Interview	Name of person interviewed, method of communication, date of interview

? Exercise 1

Create a working bibliography using the format that is most convenient for you. List at least five sources you plan to use. Continue to add sources to your working bibliography throughout the research process. If you decide not to use a source, you can delete it.

Tip

You may want to keep a special folder in your computers file system to hold research you've found for your paper so that you can find it all easily.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Good researchers stay focused and organized as they gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and think about your goal as a researcher—to find information that will help you answer your research question. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it.

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their notes relate to the questions and ideas they started out with. Remember that you do not need to write down every detail from your reading. In fact, it is better to take notes on the main ideas and annotate based on your thoughts. If you find an especially interesting quote, but it isn't a main idea -- just highlight it and write down your thoughts about it -- again, just like a conversation. These might help you develop your analysis and explanation when drafting your paper. Focus mainly on finding and recording main ideas and important points that will help you answer your research questions.

The following strategies will help you take and organize notes efficiently.

Use Themed Headings and Color Coding to Organize Ideas

If you created a mind map or KWL+ chart during any part of the early phase of thinking about your research paper, you may have already pre-identified some themes that you might focus on while you are reading. Inevitably you will find other repeating opinions or thoughts about the topic. You might also find some that stand out on their own as an innovative way of looking at the topic. For instance, when Miguel researches his question about low-carbohydrate diets, he will likely find opinions about energy needs, the standard American diet (SAD), and synthesis of fats and carbohydrates while burning calories. He also will likely find various people's personal experiences with such diets. He did not expect to find information about the carbohydrate needs of people going through various disease process, such as fighting cancer, however. When Miguel found in a couple of different article that the carbohydrate needs of people with certain diseases were different from the average person, he identified a new theme and an unexpected viewpoint. He added this to the subtopics he planned to cover.

As you read, you will inevitably find some recurring subtopics, opinions, or themes regarding your research question. If you have a large number of sources. and they are printed or in an e-reader with annotation tools, it can be helpful to identify and color code for these themes, especially if you are a visual learner. You can do this by matching a color of a sticky note or flag or e-highlighter for each theme you identify. Then, as you read, along with your written annotations, you can place a flag, sticky note or highlight in the appropriate color on that page for that theme. Usually, research papers are organized by subtopic or theme, so as you develop each section later on, you can more easily find the relevant points each writer makes about the topic or theme. This will help avoid the "patchwork" problem that occurs when you just try to works with one author at a time rather than one theme at a time. You will also more easily be able to find your reactions and thoughts about each topic.

Example

Central Question:

Why Is No One Doing Anything about Violence Against Native American Women?

Native American women's voices

Strange Law Enforcement Boundaries

Bad Statistics

Colonization

Psychology of Trauma

Exercise 2

Choose a color for each theme/major topic in your notes. As you read and annotate, place a sticky note in the relevant color wherever you see that an author is writing about that theme/major topic. If you are using an e-reader, highlight the quote or section of the text with that highlighter color.

Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes

Regardless of the format used, any notes you take should include enough information to help you organize ideas and locate them instantly in the original text if you need to review them. Make sure your notes include the following elements:

- Heading summing up the main topic covered
- Author's name, a source code, or an abbreviated source title
- Page number
- Full URL of any pages buried deep in a website

Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea to its source. Always include source information so you know exactly which ideas came from which sources. Use quotation marks to set off any words for phrases taken directly from the original text. If you add your own responses and ideas, make sure they are distinct from ideas you quoted or paraphrased.

Make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text. Make sure quoted material is copied verbatim with no mistakes. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure that you have restated the author's ideas accurately in your own words.

You may also want to start a document where you begin to organize your notes by topic or theme (not by author). In your document, using bold headers so you can easily find them later when typing in notes, type in the themes or topics that you have identified. Then, after you read a source, place the quote or paraphrase you identified while reading, along with the important source information mentioned in the bulleted list, above, in that section. If you wrote down an annotation with your thoughts along with the quote, make sure you get that into your document (you may or may not use it later).

Here is an example of what that document may look like during the process:

Central Question:

Why Is No One Doing Anything about Violence Against Native American Women?

> Indigenous women in the U.S. and Canada have been experiencing an extraordinary amount of violence and murder for years, but only recently has their plight been receiving some media and government attention.
>
> Native American women's voices
>
> Brown, Alleen. "Indigenous Women Have Been Disappearing for Generations. Politicians Are Finally Starting to Notice." *The Intercept.* 2018, May 31. Retrieved from theintercept.com/2018/05/31/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women/.
>
> Strange Law Enforcement Boundaries
>
> It is difficult to gather information because of the patchwork of laws and authority from various jurisdictions (the tribal authorities, local police, state police, and the FBI and Canadian federal police).

Bad Statistics

Healy, Jack. “In Indian County, A Crisis of Missing Women. And a New One When They’re Found.” *New York Times.* 2019, Dec. 25. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/25/us/native-women-girls-missing.html.

Also, when record-keeping does happen, many Indigenous women are miscategorized and, thus, are not recognized as Native in the statistics

“Activists describe the crisis as a legacy of generations of government policies of forced removal, land seizures and violence inflicted on Indigenous people. Hundreds of the missing never return, and families said they have struggled to find counseling and treatment for those who do. Some are trying to cope with the trauma of being trafficked. Some are confronting addiction or grappling with violence they suffered on the streets. Some had fled abuse at home and do not have a safe place to welcome them back” (Healy).

Colonization

So there a number of questions here – who is luring women and girls (or just taking them) to be trafficked and why has so little attention been paid to this problem? Part of this issue is the more than 500-plus-year legacy of brutal colonization.

Psychology of Trauma

Alvarez, A. and Bachman, R. *Violence: The Enduring Problem.* 2017. Sage.

Could such treatment of Indigenous women (no matter who the culprits are) be a matter of learned behavior that is passed down through generations (Alvarez and Bachman)? It seems that’s partly possible because otherwise how would outside people know whether to go to kidnap women on a reservation?

? Exercise 3

After you have annotated your texts(s), create a document in a word processing program with color-coded headers for each of the themes or sub-topics you have identified. Place the relevant quotes or paraphrases under each header with the source and page number, and write down your thoughts about that quote or paraphrase

Know When to Summarize, Paraphrase, or Directly Quote a Source

Your notes will fall under three categories—summary notes, paraphrased information, and direct quotations from your sources. Effective researchers make choices about which types of notes are most appropriate for their purposes.

- Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.
- Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.
- Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Most of your notes should be paraphrased from the original source. Paraphrasing as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations, because it forces you to think through the information in your source and understand it well enough to restate it. Also, the majority of the information in most research writing is paraphrased, so it is a good skill to practice. In short, paraphrasing helps you stay engaged with the material instead of simply copying and pasting. It will also allow you to synthesize the ideas more easily later when you begin planning and drafting your paper. (For detailed guidelines on summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting, see "Summarizing" and "Working with Sources").

Use a System That Works for You

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choosing the format that works best for you will ensure your notes are organized, complete, and accurate. Consider implementing one of these formats when you begin taking notes:

- **Annotate directly on your sources.** This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied and or taking notes on an e-reader. This works well with the color-coding strategy mentioned above, but does require a two-step process to then get the notes organized so that the ideas can be synthesized.
- **Use index cards.** This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording

notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized.

- **Use note-taking software.** Word-processing and office software packages often include different types of note-taking software. Although you may need to set aside some time to learn the software, this method combines the speed of typing with the same degree of organization associated with handwritten note cards.
- **Create a word processing document.** This strategy is less comprehensive than note-taking software but, as explained above in "Maintain Complete, Accurate Notes," it will allow you to more easily make the transition between recording and organizing your notes.
- **Maintain a research notebook.** Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research. This is basically the low-tech version of the strategy previously mentioned.

Annotated Bibliographies

Although they can be quite a bit of work, annotated bibliographies help you ensure that you understand the general gist of what you are reading and think about whether and how a source will be useful for you. It is the beginning step of synthesizing your ideas.

The annotated bibliography should have at least the number of entries that are required by your instructor's research assignment. They should all be suitable and trustworthy, as discussed in section 5.5. These are the sources you will use in your research paper although it is possible that your final paper will have some sources that aren't included here and that you end up not using some sources that you do list here. This is because of the recursive nature of the research process.

Each entry of an annotated bibliography should have the following components:

- A bibliographic (Works Cited) entry formatted according to MLA or APA (depending on what is required in your class).
- A short paragraph (three to five sentences) summarizing the source in your own words. When using a research paper as a source, d**o not use an abstract as your summary.** Write the paragraph in your own words.
- A short paragraph stating your opinion about the source -- is it well written and credible? Do the ideas seem logically and fully expressed? Is there enough support to back up the author's assertions? This critique paragraph (again, about three to four sentences) takes into account the items you considered when determining whether the source was credible, but in a way that relates more to the details of the source.
- One final short paragraph (two to three sentences) about how the source will help you write your paper. Will you use it in any particular section or for any particular purpose?

The entries in your annotated bibliography should appear in the same order you would include them on a Works Cited page -- alphabetized by author. On your final Works Cited page with your final paper, however, you should not include any of the paragraphs that appear in the annotated bibliography; just include the bibliographic entry. In addition, the Works Cited page on your final paper should only include those sources that you actually ended up using in your final paper.

Example Annotated Bibliography Entry

Camorlinga, S. and Barker, K. "A complex adaptive system based on squirrel behavior for distributed resource allocation." *Web Intelligence and Agent Systems: An*
International Journal 4, 2006, pp. 1-23.
This journal article by two Canadian researchers describes how they use squirrel hoarding behavior as a model for creating an algorithm for figuring out the most efficient distributed storage solutions for computer networks. They also test whether such an algorithm is scalable to larger distributed systems.
This article is technical, specific, and clear regarding the rationale for the model. The testing is easy to follow, as is the way in which one can use it in larger systems. Because this is innovative, the article is understandably long because they must provide a strong rationale for the research because not too many people have done this specific sort of work.
This research provides a perspective that was innovative ten years ago when it was written. I will use it as a basis of my research to see if the algorithm or model has been refined, if it has been replicated, and whether it's actually in use.

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5.7: Critical Thinking and Research Applications



Figure: Picture from Pixabay

Using Sources Overview

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next. One of the challenges of writing an essay using sources is successfully integrating your ideas with the material from your sources. Your essay must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the balance?

Balancing your own ideas with sources' ideas involves synthesizing the information from those sources so that you can blend multiple source ideas into your own idea structure that supports your thesis. Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from research sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Now that I've read all of this information, what might my working thesis be?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions? Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources contradict or complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the information you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

Selecting Useful Information

At this point in the research process, you have gathered information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use this information as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record facts or quotations that catch your attention even if they did not seem immediately relevant to your research question. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes.

You will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Good researchers are thorough. They look at multiple perspectives, facts, and ideas related to their topic, and they gather a great deal of information. Effective writers, however, are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate

for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas—and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the pile of notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper.

As Miguel reviewed his research notes, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship between soft drinks that are high in sugar and childhood obesity—a subtopic that was too far outside of the main focus of the paper. Jorge decided to cut this material.

Writing at Work

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.



Figure: Picture from Pixabay

Identify Information That Helps Answer your Research Question

The process of writing informally, such as doing a little free writing without looking at any of your notes, can help you see how you might begin to pull together what you have learned from your research. It also will likely lead to a working thesis, which is an answer to your overarching research question. Do not feel anxious, however, if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you.

If you haven't used a pre-organization strategy, such as a mind map, begin by identifying the notes that clearly answer your research question. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program.

If you did create a mind map and have identified themes, create a word processing document with these themes as headers. Place the relevant notes under the appropriate header in the document.

As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source? Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper?** The support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your thesis. However, if you chose suitable and trustworthy sources in the first place, this should not be a problem.
- **What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information?** No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.
- **Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious—or will I need to explain it to my readers?** Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.

Tip

It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the issue. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process.

Find Connections between Your Sources

Finding connections between your sources is the beginning of synthesizing information. Watch the following video to give you an idea of what synthesis is.



Video 5.7.1

Synthesizing Information. **Provided by:** GCFLearnFree.org. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for information that connects your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper.

Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source.

Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Finally, do not ignore any information simply because it does not support your thesis. Carefully consider how that information fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source is unreliable or the information is not relevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give it careful consideration. The following video addresses some ways to connect and synthesize your sources.

Video 5.7.1

Strategies for Synthesis. **Provided by:** Dr. Mary Lourdes Silva. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

One of the strategies the video mentions is visual in nature. A related way to organize your sources (once you've identified which ones you'll use) is to bring out your mind map again and write down the author of the source you will use in each topic/theme bubble. When you're done, the same source will likely appear in multiple bubbles. Some bubbles will have multiple sources; others will have one. Some may have none, which means you either need to do a little more research or decide whether you want to include that subtopic or eliminate it. See the following sample mind map (on a different topic) once he has organized his sources in this way.

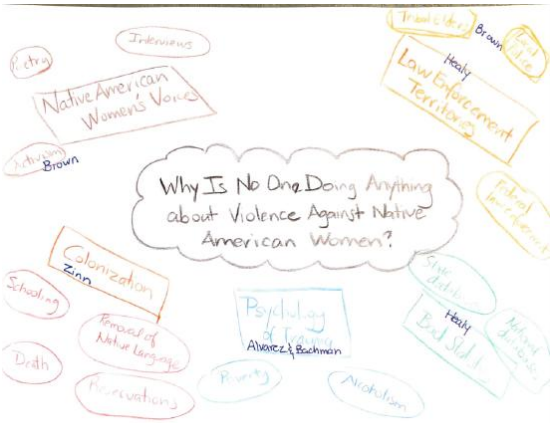


Figure: by Erika Dyquisto.

Synthesizing and Organizing Information

By now your thinking on your topic is taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing information—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing information is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign! It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

Use Your Research Questions to Synthesize Information

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the sub-questions you identified. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the sources are reliable and whether the connections between ideas are clear.

Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and sub-questions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on sticky notes or type and highlight them within an electronic document.

Use Your Mind Map to Synthesize Information

If you used a mind map, edited it to represent to add and delete and themes you discovered or eliminated while reading your research, and wrote down which sources "map" to which topics, you can also use it to identify the types of connections between your sources. This is a key step in synthesis.

In order to do this, you want to think about logical connections (see the chart in "Clause Joining"). Think about which logical relationship connects the points of view or ideas of the sources that appear in each bubble. For instance, you may have two sources that agree about a topic, but one that disagrees or brings in some other type of viewpoint. Place a representative symbol for each connection on your mind map so that you can translate that into your writing when you draft each section. For instance, Miguel might place a plus ("+") sign between the two sources that agree about a topic but place a minus ("-") sign next to the source that disagrees. See his amended mind map, below.



Figure: by Erika Dyquisto

Miguel looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He also reviewed his bubble map, and he began a rough outline for his paper.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Thesis: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Main points:

How do low-carb diets work?

Low-carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.

When did low-carb diets become a "hot" topic in the media?

The Atkins diet was created in 1972 by Richard Atkins, but it didn't gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a low-carb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.

What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?

They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue to eat protein and fats while dieting.

What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet?

Eating foods high in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

? Exercise 1

Choose the strategies from above that you believe will work best for you based on your dominant learning style, identified in Chapter 1, "Understanding Yourself as a Learner." Use those strategies to a) organize your research and b) connect your research to help you answer your research question. After completing Exercise 2, decide and take notes about whether the strategies were effective for you and what you might do differently next time.

? Exercise 2

Apply the strategies you identified in Exercise 1 to your research planning, and then create an outline that answers our research question.

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the information from the ideas.

Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different facts from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. Go back and review the connections between your sources if you need to. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

One main method of synthesizing source information with your own ideas is to offer your own comments and insights about others' ideas that you have included from your research. Once you have analyzed the texts involved in your research and taken notes, you must turn to the task of writing your essay. The goal is here is not simply to summarize your findings. *Critical writing requires that you communicate your analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of those findings to your audience*.

Re-evaluate Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your focus changed based on what you read. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis so that it is a little more specific.

Miguel realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Miguel revised his thesis to read: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Plan How to Organize Your Paper

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see Chapter 4.

The purpose of Miguel's paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.

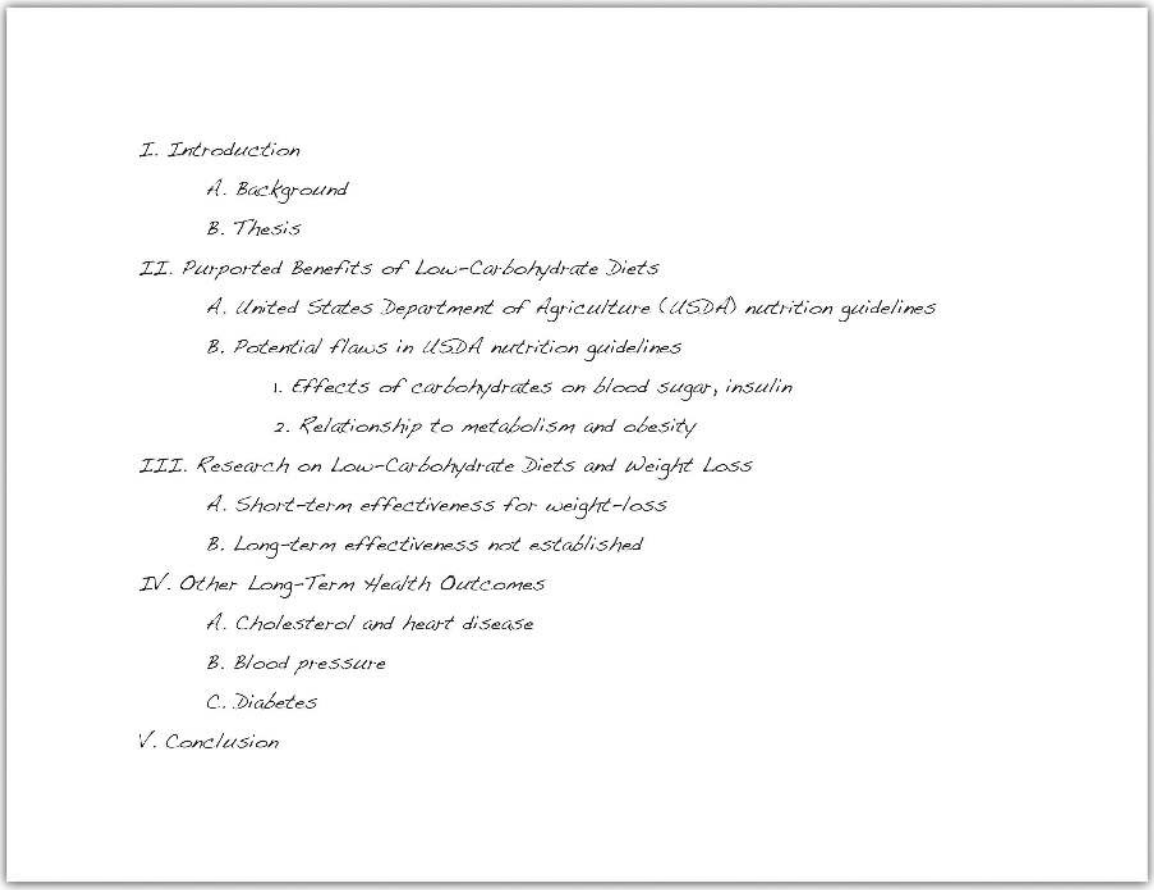


Figure: Exercise 3

Review the organizational structures discussed in this section and in Chapter 9. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper.

1. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points.

2. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that *your* ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section.

3. As you complete step 2, you may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up, and jot down additional topic sentences as needed.

4. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

Collaboration:

Please share the outline you created with a classmate. Examine your classmate's outline and see if any questions come to mind or if you see any area that would benefit from an additional point or clarification. Return the outlines to each other and compare observations.

Writing at Work

The structures described in this section and Chapter 9 can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an e-mail to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices. Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

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5.8: Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for handling the more challenging aspects of writing a research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding any misuse of your sources. First, however, we will discuss the structure of the longest type of research paper you are likely to write in a first-year composition course.

The Structure of a Research Paper

General Structure Guidelines for Research Papers

There are really two types of formal research papers: A scientific style research paper and a literature review style research paper. We will focus on the literature review style of research paper, which is really like an extended essay. However, even a literature review depends more on the research that other people have done than does a regular essay. You still bring in your own ideas, however, make the connections between everything, and come up with new ideas based on how you put together the ideas of other writers.

The structure of a research paper is very much like that of a regular essay except that your main idea may not be as clear early on (check with your instructor about this), the introduction may be longer than usual, the body of the essay is much longer, and you use many more sources. Do not describe your research process of researching and writing in a literature review research paper (scientific research papers have a methodology section where the researcher does describe their research, but that's not what you generally do in a first year composition course).

Research Paper Introductions

Write the introduction of your research paper last. If you *must* write it first to get yourself going, be sure to rewrite after you have completed your conclusion. Keep your audience in mind and what they are likely to know about your topic before reading your paper. Research paper introduction may last two or more paragraphs. Because you are writing more, you probably need to provide more background information. As in any paper, you want to move from general information that orients your reader to your topic, to more specific information that focuses more directly on what you are studying. At the end of the introduction, you may want to state your exact research question rather than a thesis.

Introductions may provide some historical background, may discuss the history of a controversy, may introduce the various factors that impact the topic, and probably introduce and define some of the key vocabulary that your reader may not know. Don't make the mistake of beginning too narrowly. Keep your reader in mind – another student in another class. Think of your research paper as an educational piece of writing that you are creating for another student, but keep the tone and language formal. Remember, they don't know what you are going to write about, so orient them to your topic by beginning broadly.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's main research question or, perhaps, the thesis.



Figure: by Daria Nepriakhina on Unsplash.

Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question

- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

For more information, see the "Introductions and Conclusions" sections in Chapter 4.

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward the research question or a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Either of these will let your readers know what direction the paper is headed.

Miguel decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. The research question is underlined. Note how Miguel progresses from the opening sentences to background information to his thesis:

> Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about 20 percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz, Hirsch). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. With so much conflicting information swirling around, how are we to know whether low-carbohydrate diets the best choice for most people?

Thesis Location

The thesis for a research paper may only be implied until the conclusion of your paper. You will hint at it through your topic sentences and the way you discuss the information. However, the stated thesis most likely won't occur until the beginning of your conclusion. The reason for this is the purpose of a research paper, which is academic inquiry. You don't want to enter the research process thinking you already know what you want to say with an already determined point of view. You want to enter the process with an open mind of exploration. This is where your research question will really help you. It keeps you objective so that you may say to yourself (or write in your paper), "these authors take xxxx perspective on this topic because….." Then you can evaluate the merits of that point of view in your paper. It's not until you've discussed all of the relevant opinions and research that you should come to a conclusion. This is what an informed and thoughtful person does – evaluates the various arguments and information and arrives at an informed conclusion. In effect, that's what you're doing on paper for your reader.

The Body of the Research Paper

Write the body of your research paper first. The body of the research paper is very much like the body of a regular essay . . . only longer. Each paragraph needs a main idea, to be cohesive, and to discuss and support that idea. Each paragraph needs explanation so that the reader knows why this particular thing or point of view you are writing about is important. You should make it clear how the topic you are discussing in the paragraph connects or helps answer your guiding question. You may organize your research paper into multiple sections, each with its own main idea and multiple paragraphs.

Transitions between ideas can be more important in research papers than in traditional essays because you, as the writer, are synthesizing so much more information. There may be multiple points of view about a topic, different kinds of relationships between ideas and multiple levels of information that you need to deal with. With so much information swirling around, one of your main tasks is to convey to your reader what to think about all of this information and guide them through it. To write transitions, you cannot simply write about one author's work and then another; you must group and sort the information by theme, and point of view, and then write transitions to lead your reader through the forest of information (see the "they say/I say" discussion on the second video on this page).

The Conclusion of the Research Paper

Write the conclusion after you have written the body of your research paper. Just as in most essays, the conclusion of a research paper should look to the future and broaden out from your particular topic. Also, it should begin with a transition from the last section into your thesis. It can also help to think about what we still need to know about this topic or what we still need to know or understand to answer your central question. To write a conclusion, ask yourself: What might we expect or hope to learn about this topic in the future? What else needs to be examined to answer this question? How will this knowledge help us in other ways? In what areas can this knowledge be applied? What other perspectives might be considered in future research?

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis, a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence, and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your introduction and conclusion, as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Tip

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some of all of the body.

Writing at Work (and in the sciences)

If your job involves writing or reading scientific papers, it helps to understand how professional researchers use the structure described in this section. A scientific paper begins with an abstract that briefly summarizes the entire paper. The introduction explains the purpose of the research, briefly summarizes previous research, and presents the researchers' hypothesis. The body provides details about the study, such as who participated in it, what the researchers measured, and what results they recorded. The conclusion presents the researchers' interpretation of the data, or what they learned.

Using Source Material in Your Paper

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

As you can see, using sources involves much more than just including a series of quotations in your essay. To avoid falling into the trap of having strings of quotations and very little else in a research essay, follow a few simple pointers:

- Avoid using strings of long quotations. The overuse of long quotations gives the reader the impression you cannot think for yourself.
- Use summaries and paraphrases in addition to direct quotations. To the reader, the effective use of summaries and paraphrases indicates that you took the time to think about the meaning behind the quote's words.
- Make sure to comment on any information you quote, summarize, and paraphrase. Remember that your researched information is there to support to your own ideas and logical argument in your research essay, and that incorporating research is like creating a conversation.
- Finally, make sure to identify all of your quoted, summarized, and paraphrased information with citations, so your reader can easily differentiate your sources' from your own information and ideas.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. Use topic sentences in your paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or quotations you cite. You will also need to include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce paraphrased and quoted material.

Earlier you learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting when taking notes. In the next few sections, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to support your ideas.

Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. If you wrote an annotated bibliography, you have already done this and can incorporate just the parts of those summaries you may need into your research paper. Also, see the "summary" section in this e-book. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers.

In his draft, Miguel summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Miguel's summary of the article.

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets

Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study by Jones found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies (Kirkhoff and Mashoud, Janus and Beebe) that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

summary

In three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time (Howell, 2010).

Tip

A summary restates ideas in your own words -- but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Miguel used the term *obese* in his summary because related words such as *heavy* or *overweight* have a different clinical meaning.

Paraphrasing Sources

A paraphrase re-states information and ideas from a source using your own wording and sentence structure. Paraphrasing is similar to summarizing; however, summaries condense the original down to the essential or main ideas, while paraphrases simply re-state the original portion of text in your own words.

So why paraphrase? Paraphrasing offers a way to maintain your own writing style and voice throughout the writing. It helps cut down on the number of different styles from different sources, creating a sleeker, easier reading experience for your reader. Most of all, though, paraphrasing is a means of helping you understand what your sources are saying, in order to incorporate that information into your own writing. You have to understand the source's ideas fully in order to rewrite them clearly.

When you paraphrase, make sure ***not*** to simply substitute one word for another, retaining the same sentence structure. Paraphrasing requires you to use your own sentence structures as well as words, so that you are not inadvertently plagiarizing the source.

In general, it is best to paraphrase when:

- There is no good reason to use a quote to refer to your evidence. If the author’s exact words are not especially important to the point you are trying to make, you are usually better off paraphrasing the evidence.
- You are trying to explain technical information or complicated language to a more general reading audience.
- You are trying to explain a particular a piece of evidence in order to explain or interpret it in more detail. This might be particularly true in writing projects like critiques.
- You need to balance a direct quote in your writing. You need to be careful about directly quoting your research too much because it can sometimes make for awkward and difficult to read prose. So, one of the reasons to use a paraphrase instead of a quote is to create balance within your writing.

But before we can go into the "how to" of paraphrasing, we should examine the sometimes fine line between paraphrasing and plagiarism. Doing so is important because many fields (especially in the sciences) very rarely or never use quotation, exclusively using paraphrasing instead. Second, not paraphrasing well is the cause behind many if not most cases of plagiarism, so to avoid accidental plagiarism, you should learn how to paraphrase well. Finally, almost everyone needs to paraphrase sometimes; in fact, you most likely already do, at least in conversation.

How Plagiarism Often Happens

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit

accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

Plagiarism is usually not the obvious kind of cut-and-paste theft you might associate with cheating on a research paper. Rather, writers think about what they want to communicate and what's important to them. They usually develop a theme on their own, research it, and find a number of sources to draw from. The result of this research is a bunch of fragments from all over the place. One of those fragments, if not properly paraphrased *and* cited as the fragments coalesced into a paper, becomes an example of plagiarism because the writer lost track of its origin.

> Carelessness often creates plagiarism. For example, the famous scientist Jane Goodall, who studied wild chimpanzees, blamed "chaotic note taking" for plagiarized passages in her book, *Seeds of Hope*.

This video explains it a little more.



Video 5.8.1

Plagiarism . . . Definition, Consequences and Examples. **Authored by:** NurseKillam. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License

Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. Maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. Check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Allow plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

How to Avoid This Mistake

How do you gather your notes? Do you bookmark Web passages, use Evernote or Zotero, or create index cards or sticky notes? No matter your method, you should have a consistent and clear method to keep track of your sources.

Within your writing, you can use sources ethically and avoid plagiarism by identifying or attributing your source, even when you paraphrase. Some students think you only need to cite your source if you quote. That's not true -- any source, whether it's a quote or a paraphrase, must be cited in order to avoid a charge of plagiarism. Your mind can run free, your text can flow, but your attributions must be as fastidious as an accountant's.

> **Tip**
>
> Many courses at college have an online component of the class. In California, this is usually Canvas. Your instructor may set up some of your assignments so that they are run through plagiarism detection software to determine its "originality." Really this means, "how much does what you write differ from sources on the Internet and what has previously been submitted to the institution?". Some instructors will allow you to upload your draft and check the originality report. The report will show what phrases and sentences in your paper match phrases and sentences in other sources. Usually you don't need to worry about sources that are in quotation marks because the software will assume that you are also citing them (though your instructor will notice if the citations are missing). This software is most valuable in seeing how well you paraphrase. If you see sentences highlighted or chunks of sentences highlighted, you will know you need to do a little more work to paraphrase your sources correctly. See below for a video about how to read an example report.



Video 5.8.1

Paraphrasing Check.Authored by: Erika Dyquisto. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

When to Cite

Any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and the references list. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward.

Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Miguel was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Miguel's revision.

summary

Heinz found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period." These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period" (Heinz). From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results." Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson and Crowe).

After reviewing the paragraph, Miguel realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Miguel had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

REVISED summary

Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for 4 months lost, on average, about 3 kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz

> concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe. What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.

As Miguel revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay. Even though he paraphrased his sources, he still cited them.

✔ Writing at Work

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For ore extensive use of others' work -- for instance, requesting permission to link to another company's website on your own corporate website--always follow your employer's established procedures.

Academic Integrity

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue—academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field.

Academic integrity violations have serious educational and professional consequences, as noted in the video above. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. Students who are found guilty of academic integrity violations face consequences ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the university. Employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In short, it is never worth the risk.

To test your understanding of how to use sources ethically, take SUNY Empire State College's Academic Integrity Quiz.

? Exercise 1

Take SUNY Empire State College's Academic Integrity quiz, linked in the previous paragraph. After taking the quiz, discuss with a classmate what you knew and what you learned when taking a quiz. Together, write down two questions to ask your instructor in class about academic integrity.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing well is one of the most important skills you can learn in a college writing class. You will use it throughout your academic--and very likely your work--career. Not only do we paraphrase to convey information smoothly, in many academic and work fields, paraphrasing, rather than quoting, is the standard way of conveying other people's information. It is important to learn to paraphrase well in order to avoid plagiarizing and to be able to change other people's ideas into your "voice." Paraphrased passages are always cited, just as quotes are. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Paraphrasing is also a good writing technique to make ensure you understand your reading thoroughly. If you struggle to create a paraphrase, it may be that you don't fully understand the reading and should work more on that.

Writing a Paraphrase Properly

Make sure that you understand the original text that you intend to paraphrase. Rewrite that text at least twice, in your own words. It can help to read it, turn the reading over so you can't see it, and then write it in your own words. After the first rewriting, set the paraphrase aside for a short time. When you go back to it, you'll most likely see that you've tended to retain some of the original text's wording and sentence structure. On a second (or third, or fourth) rewriting, try to make the language and sentence structure your own, while retaining the meaning of the original text. If you find that the original text uses a key word or phrase that you don't want to rewrite, know that you can always include it in quotation marks within your paraphrase. Finally, make sure to attribute the paraphrase at the start (e.g., "According to…") and include a citation at the end. Your readers should be able to distinguish your own information from paraphrased information, and the attribution and citation signal the beginning and end of the paraphrase.

Paraphrasing Example

The original passage, from Benjamin Franklin's "Speech to the [Constitutional] Convention":

> Mr. President, I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present; but, Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it; for, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change my opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.

Here is the initial try at a paraphrase:

> Benjamin Franklin tells the president of the Constitutional Convention that he does **not entirely** approve of the Constitution at the **present** time, but that he is not sure **he will never approve it.** He points out that he has lived a long time, and in his experience there have been **many instances** when **better information of fuller consideration** of a topic have made him change his opinions **on important subjects** that he had originally thought to be correct. He points out that he finds himself more likely to doubt his own judgment the older he gets, and contrasts his knowledge of his own fallibility with other people's conviction of their infallibility.

The problem with this paraphrase is in the way that it reproduces distinctive phrasing, sentence structure, and ordering of ideas. Note that the bolded parts of the paragraph actually reproduce Franklin's wording exactly, and that the order of information in the paraphrase is essentially the same as in the original. Notice the end of the paraphrase also contains extra information that is not present in the original passage.

Now consider this **GOOD** revised version:

> Benjamin Franklin tells the president of the Constitutional Convention that although he is currently uncertain about the Constitution they have created, he may eventually acknowledge its effectiveness. This is due, he explains, to new information or a different understanding of similarly important topics that have cause him to change his mind in the past.

This paraphrase is strong because of the way that it captures the main ideas and important details of the original passage without reproducing phrasing or sentence structure too exactly. There are still similarities of phrasing and structure, but they deviate in notable ways from the phrasing and structure of the original passage. Also unlike the first paraphrase, this one does not include information not found in the original passage.

Paraphrase Checklist

Use the following checklist to help you create an appropriate paraphrase.

- Have you used your own words and sentence structures?
- Even though the wording is your own, have you carefully retained the meaning of the original text?
- Did you attribute the paraphrase at the start, using language in some way that explains that you're paraphrasing another's text? (e.g., "Smith states that…")
- Did you cite the paraphrase correctly at the end, using a standard citation format for in-text citations?
- Did you cite the paraphrased source in the Works Cited list at the end of the essay?

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. It can help to not look at the source material while you do this.

Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style. If you are writing a paper, and your instructor uses plagiarism detection software, consider asking your instructor if you can use the software to make sure your paraphrase is in your own words well enough. Passages that are not paraphrased well enough will have color highlighting in various places in the passage. This means that the paraphrase needs to be improved to be considered (and maybe that you need to understand the material better) an appropriate paraphrase.

In his draft, Miguel frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the passage from the website source, below. Then read Miguel's initial attempt at paraphrasing it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

✔ source

> Dieters nearly always get great results soon after they begin following a low-carbohydrate diet, but these results tend to taper off after the first few months, particularly because many dieters find it difficult to follow a low-carbohydrate diet plan consistently.

summary

People usually see encouraging outcomes shortly after they go on a low-carbohydrate diet, but their progress slows down after a short while, especially because most discover that it is a challenge to adhere to the diet strictly (Heinz, 2009).

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Miguel realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

summary

Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009).

? Exercise 2

Paraphrase the following passage from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) website, and ensure it follows the guidelines for a good paraphrase, above.

Origins of Earthquake Early Warning

Wherever people live with earthquakes, there is a desire for an early warning system that shaking is imminent. Even as far back as 1868, following a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on the Hayward fault, the San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin published an editorial proposing an early warning system. Calls echoing that desire continued throughout the 20th century in countries as far off as Iran, Italy, Japan, and Mexico.

In the United States, the first serious proposal for such a system came from USGS geophysicist Tom Heaton in 1985. Dr. Heaton's pioneering insight was ahead of its time, but the technology available in 1985 was not adequate for the system he proposed.

However, a few years later, other USGS scientists would temporarily use some of Heaton's innovative ideas after the Loma Prieta earthquake to try to safeguard the lives of rescue workers in the Bay Area. The intense shaking from the mainshock of Loma Prieta collapsed a 1.6-mile (2.5-kilometer) section of the Nimitz Freeway (referred to as the "Cypress Structure") along I-880 through Oakland. As rescuers worked to free people trapped in the rubble, the risk of aftershocks damaging the freeway further and injuring the workers became apparent. So USGS scientists set up a temporary system that radioed alerts to the workers whenever there was a significant aftershock that might shake the Nimitz. During its six months of operation, the system sent warnings for 12 earthquakes greater than magnitude 3.7.

? Exercise 3

1. From a source related to your research topic, choose a 7- to 12-sentence long passage. Avoid introductory or concluding paragraphs, as these are often very general.

2. Paraphrase the original and include the citation in the text as well as in a Reference List. Add exercises text here.

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Or if you need exact words to be able to support your assertion, a quote can be an important type of evidence. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact.

When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence with a signal phrase that provides context.
- Use ellipses (…) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace or add a word or phrase to make the quote flow grammatically with your own sentence.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Miguel interviewed a dietician as part of his research, and he decided to quote her words in his paper. Read an excerpt from the interview and Miguel's use of it, which follows.

Source

Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype about low-carbohydrate miracle diets like Atkins and so on. Sure, for some people, they are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well.

summary

Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) admits, "Personally, I don't really buy into all of the hype.…Sure, for some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well."

Notice how Miguel smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory phrase. His use of ellipses and brackets did not change the source's meaning.

Documenting Source Material

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources, whether they are quotes or paraphrases. When you document sources within your writing, they are called "in-text citations." The full documentation of all of your sources (each only entered once) is in the Bibliography or Works Cited page at the end of your paper. The purpose of doing so is twofold:

1. To give credit to other writers or researchers for their ideas
2. To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired, which is part of the "conversation" or research.

Two of the most common documentation styles in academic writing are the Modern Language Association (MLA) style and the American Psychological Association (APA) style. The latter of these is used for documenting most social sciences and educational research also. Since this book is for English classes, we will use MLA style. Do not feel like you need to memorize a style; rather, use the various guidebooks and resources that are out there to help you document your sources in your writing.

Citing Sources in the Body of Your Paper ("in-text" citations)

In-text citations document your sources within the body of your paper. These include two vital pieces of information: the author's name and the page number (if there is one) of the source material. Page numbers are necessary only when content has been directly quoted, not when it has been summarized or paraphrased.

Within a sentence, the in-text citation information may appear as part of your introduction to the material or as a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence. Read the examples that follow.

summary

Leibowitz found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels.

The introduction to the source material includes the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

summary

Low-carbohydrate diets often help subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar levels (Leibowitz).

The parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence includes the author's name and the page number (if any) with only a space in between. The period at the end of the sentence comes after the parentheses. If you are quoting a source, it should look like this:

quotation

Herman Melville, in his first volume of poetry, wrote, "it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (1).

quotation

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (Melville 1).

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body text will appear in a references list at the end of your paper. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your references section will include additional publication details. In general, you will include the following information:

- The author's last name followed by his or her first (and sometimes middle) initial
- The year the source was published
- The source title
- For articles in periodicals, the full name of the periodical, along with the volume and issue number and the pages where the article appeared

Additional information may be included for different types of sources, such as online sources. For a detailed guide to APA or MLA citations, see Chapter 13. A sample reference list is provided with the final draft of Jorge's paper later in this chapter.

Incorporating Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present a writer's analysis or interpretation of primary source materials. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Incorporating Primary Sources Effectively

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a literature course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a political science course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a communications course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a business administration course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flex time policies
- A paper for an elementary education course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. For example, the interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your reader.

You are already familiar with incorporating quotations and paraphrases from primary sources that people other than yourself have produced. But you may not be familiar with how to incorporate your own primary research. When Miguel was writing his paper, he decided to give a survey to people he knew about whether and why people the author knew participated in low-carb diets. he also asked questions to determine how effective they were. When gathering your own data like this, it is best to summarize the data that

you found before writing about it. In other words, you must analyze the data you gathered and summarize it. You then refer to your overall findings. To incorporate his findings, Miguel wrote:

> Survey data show that not many people seem to be committed to staying on a low-carb diet, as -- after only a week -- most survey respondents had already given up on the diet (Ramirez).

Note that Miguel cited his own last name when quoting his own research. That's really the only difference between incorporating a primary source that you collected versus primary research that someone else said.

Incorporating Secondary Sources Effectively

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, you will need to use secondary sources extensively.

As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article presenting the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as a primary source, but might also cite commentary from critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

Miguel knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper other than a little additional complimentary research. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

Tip

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind legislation has affected elementary education, a *Time* magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

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5.9: Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research project, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully.

You may feel like you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper: Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographical entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper. It is also important to revise your content before editing for word choice and tone so that you only have to complete that more detailed level of editing once.

A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

Revise to Improve Organization

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. You also should make sure the transitions, or logical connections, between one paragraph and the next -- and especially one section and the next -- are clear. Use the following checklist to help you, but be sure the revise at the organizational level before you revise at the paragraph level.

Checklist

Revision: Organization

At the essay level

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the paragraph level

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transition words or sentences to improve the flow of sentences? See cohesion for more specifics about revising for this.

Exercise 1

To help you decide whether your essay is organized correctly, try the low-tech way or seeing what paragraph organization works best. It can be especially cumbersome to reorganize paragraphs on a computer, so sometimes doing this on paper works better. Here are the steps:

1. Print out your paper one-sided. Add in spaces between paragraphs so that no paragraphs are split between two pages.

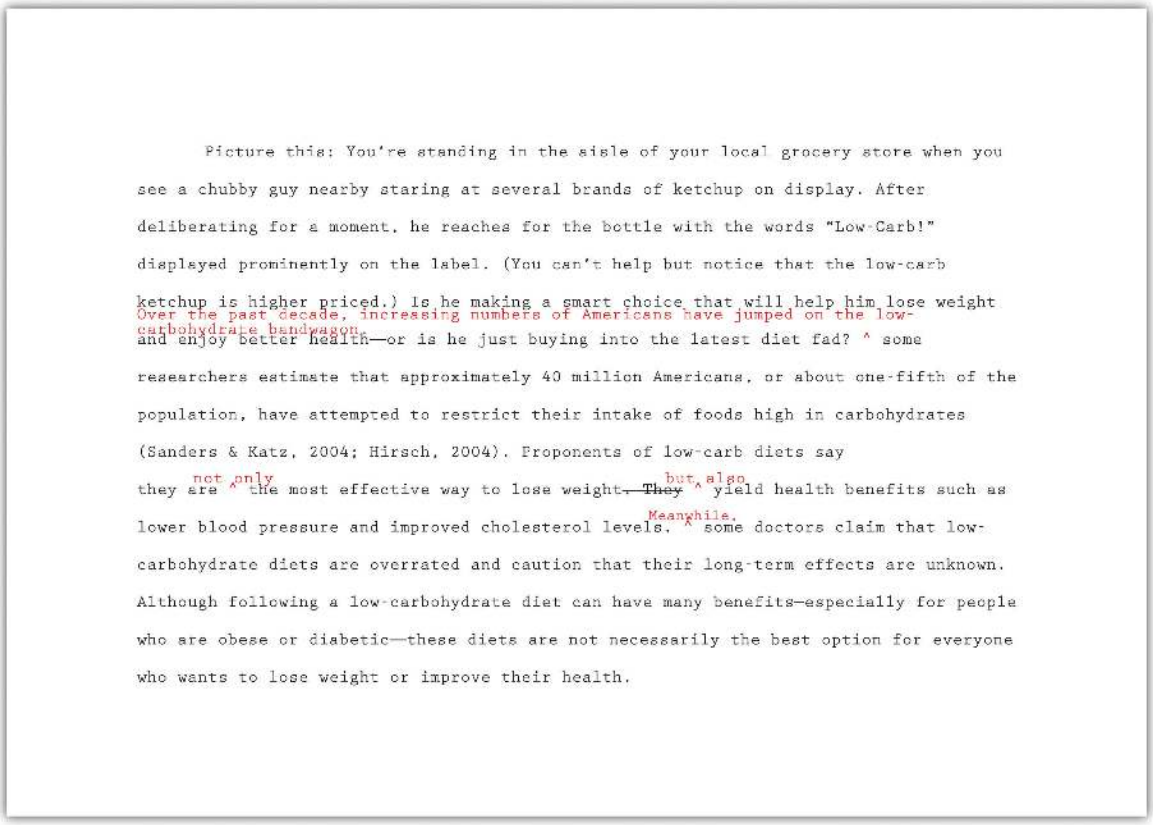
2. Cut apart your paragraphs (but keep each paragraph together).

3. Give the cut-apart paragraphs to a friend, and see if they can figure out which order they should go in. If they decide it goes in the order you already have your paper in, your paper is probably organized well already. If they cannot figure out the order,

ask them to explain to you which paragraphs they are unsure about. This should give you a clue about where you should reorganize your paragraphs, if transitions need to be added, or if there is a missing chunk of information that should be developed to improve the overall cohesion of the paper.

Revise to Improve Paragrah Cohesion

In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect. Use the next checklist to review your essay for paragraph cohesion. Miguel did this in the introductory paragraph of his research paper:



Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Over the past decade, incressing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carbohydrate bandwagon. ^ some researchers estimate that approximately 40 million Americans, or about one-fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders & Katz, 2004; Hirsch, 2004). Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only ^ the most effective way to lose weight~~. They~~ but also ^ yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, ^ some doctors claim that low-carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown. Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Tip

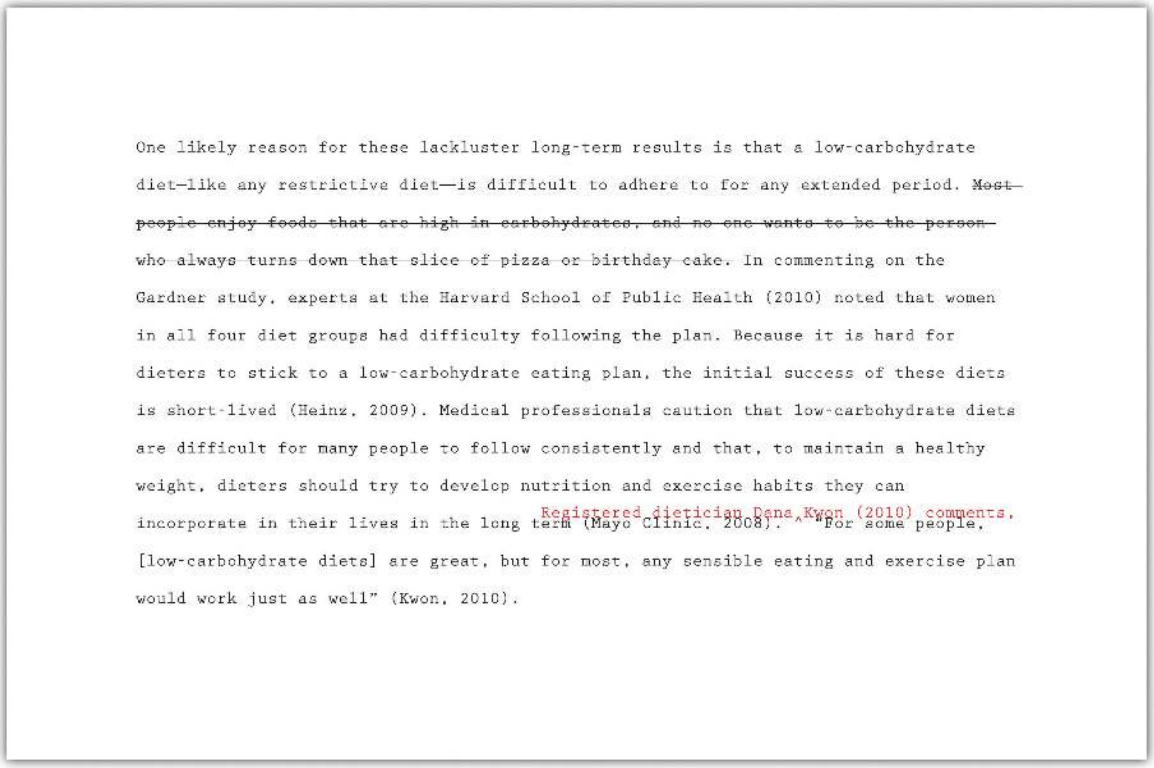
Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose and avoid overusing the same ones.

Checklist

Revision: Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis? Make sure entertaining quotes or anecdotes serve a purpose.
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations? Quotations should never stand alone in a paragraph.
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper? Make sure any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion are clearly linked to earlier material.

As Miguel reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully and decided to omit some details entirely. Read the following paragraph, first without Miguel's revisions and then with them.



One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low-carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. ~~Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake.~~ In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health (2010) noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. Because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short-lived (Heinz, 2009). Medical professionals caution that low-carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Clinic, 2008). Registered dietician Dana Kwon (2010) comments, "For some people, [low-carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well" (Kwon, 2010).

Figure: Miguel decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that the quotation at the end of the paragraph was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding an introductory phrase helped Miguel integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

? Exercise 2

Follow these steps to begin revising your paper to improve cohesion.

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from the first exercise on this page.
2. Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph.
3. Be sure there is a direct connection between the idea in the sentence before the quote or paraphrase, as well as between the idea in the quote or paraphrase and the sentence that comes after it.
4. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete.
5. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources.
6. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion.
7. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented connects directly with ideas in the body of the paper.
8. Revise the places you identified in your paper to improve cohesion.

Collaboration

Exchange papers with a classmate. On the classmate's paper, identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete. Also, note any areas that would benefit from clarification or a clearer connection. Return and compare notes.

Writing at Work

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation, and the financial report shows that the company lost money, funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

Using a Consistent Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Style refers to the way you use language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers.

Determining an Appropriate Style and Tone

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced or biased.



Video 5.9.1

- Editing for Register and Tone. **Authored by:** Dr. Satu Manninen. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep, partly because the audiences are likely different.

A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious. It is generally best to avoid writing in the first or second person, as this can make your paper seem overly subjective and opinion based. Use the next checklist on style to review your paper for other issues that affect style and tone. You can check for consistency at the end of the writing process. Checking for consistency is discussed later in this section.

Checklist

Style

- My paper avoids excessive wordiness.
- My sentences are varied in length and structure.
- I have generally avoided using first-person pronouns, such as "I," and definitely avoided the second person, "you."
- I have used the active voice whenever possible.
- I have defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers.

- I have used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon.
- My paper states my point of view using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful.
- I have used the simple present tense when referring to what other people did in their research.

Word Choice

Note that word choice is an especially important aspect of style. In addition to checking the points noted on the above Checklist, review your paper to make sure your language is precise, conveys no unintended connotations, and is free of biases. Here are some of the points to check for:

- Vague or imprecise terms
- Slang
- Repetition of the same phrases ("Smith states…, Jones states…") to introduce quoted and paraphrased material (For a full list of strong verbs to use with in-text quotations, see Chapter 11.)
- Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of *he* or *she*
- Use of language with negative connotations, such as *haughty* or *ridiculous*
- Use of outdated or offensive terms to refer to specific ethnic, racial, or religious groups

Tip:

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender inclusive while avoiding awkwardness. Consider the following examples:

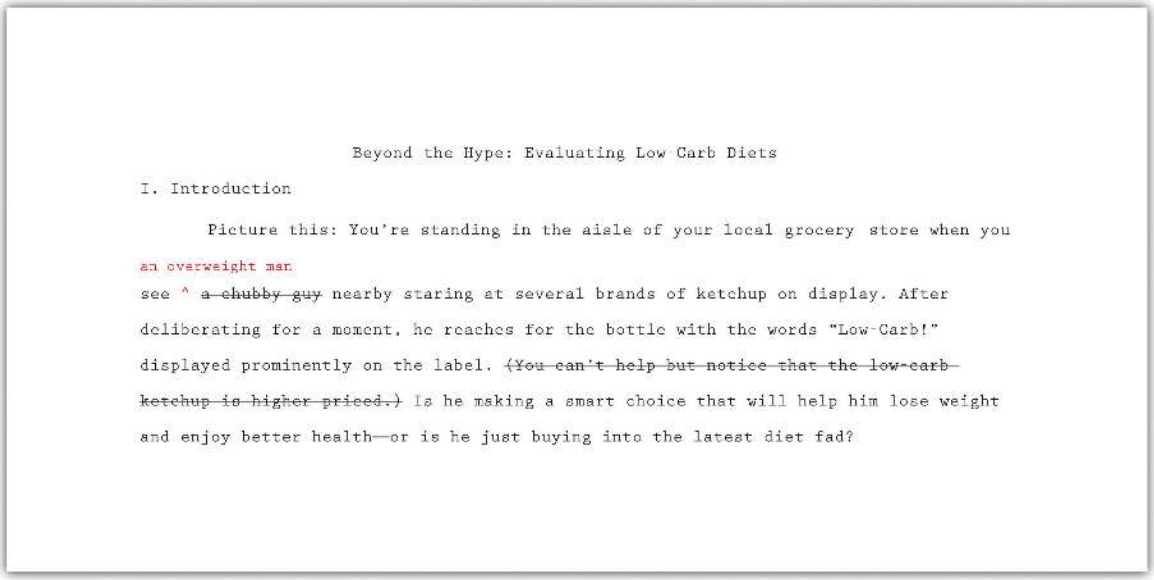
- **Gender-biased:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page.
- **Awkward:** When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page.
- **Inclusive:** Writers must list any sources cited in the body of their paper on the references page

Keeping Your Style Consistent

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so that you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies you can use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud.** Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback.** It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line-edit your paper slowly, sentence by sentence.** You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Miguel found that he had generally used an appropriately academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Miguel maintain a consistent tone. Read his revisions.



Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low Carb Diets

I. Introduction

Picture this: You're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you an overweight man see ^ ~~a chubby guy~~ nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. ~~(You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.)~~ Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?

? Exercise 3

Using the "Style" checklist, line-edit your paper. You may use either of these techniques:

1. Print out a hard copy of your paper, or work with your printout from the previous exercise. Read it line by line. Check for the issues noted on the "Style" checklist, as well as any other aspects of your writing style you or your instructor have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.
2. If you prefer to work with an electronic document, use the menu options in your word-processing program to enlarge the text to 150 or 200 percent of the original size. Make sure the type is large enough that you can focus on only one paragraph at a time. Read the paper line by line as described in step 1. Highlight any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

Proofreading Your Paper

The following video will give an overview of some proofreading strategies.



Video 5.9.1

Proofreading strategies. **Authored by:** Coventry University, Centre for Academic Writing. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you already have caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

1. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
2. Errors in citing and formatting sources

For in-depth information on these two topics, see Chapter 11, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13.

Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful—but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Grammar check can also sometimes be helpful, but they may not catch grammar errors in the more complicated sentences that college students write. Be sure to do your own proofreading; however, if you want to get someone else's eyes, ask them to either circle or underline where they see a problem (but not fix it), or write an "x" next to the line with the proofreading mistake. It is then up to you to find the actual mistake. Either way, you should figure out what the mistake is and fix it yourself.

Writing at Work

Proofreading well is essential at many workplaces. Proofreading mistakes -- even in short emails -- can give the impression that you do not pay attention to detail or that you are not knowledable. Even though it is not necessarily true that writing is a basic skill, many people in the workplace view it as such, so proofreading is a skill you should have under control when you are in the workpplace so that people don't get the wrong impression of you.

Checking Citations and Formatting

When editing a research paper, it is also important to check that you have cited sources properly and formatted your document according to the specified guidelines. There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, citing sources correctly ensures that you have given proper credit to other people for ideas and information that helped you in your work. Second, using correct formatting establishes your paper as one student's contribution to the work developed by and and the conversation in a larger academic community.

Checklist

Citations and Formatting

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source (whether quoted of paraphrased) is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, where applicable, the organization name or source title) and page number (if there is one -- MLA format). I have used the correct format of in-text and parenthetical citations.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the references section of my paper.
- My references section includes a centered heading that says "Works Cited" and double-spaced, alphabetized entries.
- Each entry in my references section is indented on the second line and all subsequent lines (hanging indent).
- Each entry in my references section includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. Text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

For detailed guidelines on APA and MLA citation and formatting, see Chapter 13.

Writing at Work

Following APA or MLA citation and formatting guidelines may require time and effort. However, it is good practice for learning how to follow accepted conventions in any professional field. Many large corporations create a style manual with guidelines for editing and formatting documents produced by that corporation. Employees follow the style manual when creating internal documents and documents for publication.

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5.10: Key Takeaways

- Research writing is a conversation, and your job is to find your place in that conversation and go into it with an open mind, without a pre-decided point of view.
- Research is a process, and you may need to even go find more information after you've already begun writing.
- Research is a skill used commonly at work and requires project management skills.
- Anticipate problems and plan for alternate ways to get your work done.
- When drafting, work on one topic at a time.
- A writer’s use of primary and secondary sources is determined by the topic and purpose of the research. Sources used may include print sources, such as books and journals; electronic sources, such as websites and articles retrieved from databases; and human sources of information, such as interviews.
- Strategies that help writers locate sources efficiently include conducting effective keyword searches, understanding how to use online catalogs and databases, using strategies to narrow web search results, and consulting reference librarians.
- In their notes, effective writers record organized, complete, accurate information. This includes bibliographic information about each source as well as summarized, paraphrased, or quoted information from the source.
- It's a good idea to summarize each source, write down relevant paraphrases for ideas that can be expressed in your own words, and write down quotations for those ideas where the exact words of the author really matter.
- Annotate your sources and record your thoughts and reactions to ideas or sentences you find particularly engaging.
- It is important for writers to revisit their research questions and working thesis as they transition from the research phase to the writing phase of a project. Usually, the working thesis will need at least minor adjustments. The research question may occasionally need to be revised as well.
- To organize a research paper, writers choose a structure that is appropriate for the topic and purpose. Longer papers may make use of more than one structure.
- Direct quotations should be used sparingly. Ellipses and brackets must be used to indicate words that were omitted or changed/added for conciseness or grammatical correctness.
- Plagiarism has serious academic and professional consequences. To avoid accidental plagiarism, keep research materials organized, understand guidelines for fair use and appropriate citation of sources, and review the paper to make sure these guidelines are followed.
- In a cohesive research paper, the elements of the paper work together smoothly and naturally. When revising a research paper, evaluate its cohesion. In particular, check that information from research is smoothly integrated with your ideas.
- An effective research paper uses a style and tone that are appropriately academic and serious. When revising a research paper, check that the style and tone are consistent throughout.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Forming Your Own Argument

6.1: Organizing a Paper to Respond to Sources
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6.4: Topic Sentences
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6.11: Proposal Arguments

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6.1: Organizing a Paper to Respond to Sources

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (8 min, 52 sec):

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Before we start talking about how to choose search terms and where to search for sources, it can help to get a sense of what we're hoping to get out of the research. We might think that in order to support a thesis we should only look for sources that prove an idea we want to promote. But since writing academic papers is about joining a conversation, what we really need is to gather the sources that will help us situate our ideas within that ongoing conversation. What we should look for first is not support but the conversation itself: who is saying what about our topic?

The sources that make up the conversation may have various kinds of points to make and ultimately may play very different roles in our paper. After all, as we have seen in Chapter 2, an argument can involve not just evidence for a claim but limits, counterarguments, and rebuttals. Sometimes we will want to cite a research finding that provides strong evidence for a point; at other times, we will summarize someone else's ideas in order to explain how our own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation.

As you find sources on a topic, look for points of connection, similarity and difference between them. In your paper, you will need to show not just what each one says, but how they relate to each other in a conversation. Describing this conversation can be the springboard for your own original point.



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Here are five common ways research papers can build on multiple sources to come up with an original point:

1. **Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument.** You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early 20th-century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.
2. **Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications.** You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.
3. **Identify underlying areas of agreement.** You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention. This similarity will support your claim that insights

about one set of problems may be useful for the other.

4. **Identify underlying areas of disagreement.** You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.
5. **Identify unanswered questions.** Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

There are certainly other ways authors use sources to build theses, but these examples illustrate how original thinking in academic writing involves making connections with and between a strategically chosen set of sources.

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that gives an example of how a writer can describe a conversation among sources and use it to make an original point:

> *Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011). Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.*
>
> *Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.*
>
> *These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement." The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.*
>
> *At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible," it doesn't*

> *necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.*

In that example, the ideas of Willingham and Kahneman are summarized approvingly, bolstered with additional research findings, and then applied to a new realm: the current debate surrounding education reform. Voices in that debate were portrayed as accurately as possible, sometimes with representative quotes. Most importantly, all references were tied directly to the author's own interpretative point, which relies on the source's claims.

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Whether or not we agree with a source, we can focus on what it claims and how exactly its claims relate to other sources and to our own ideas.

[1]Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009).

[2]The sources cited in this example:

- Daniel T. Willingham, "Can teachers increase students' self control?" American Educator 35, no. 2 (2011): 22-27.
- Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.
- Suzanne Perkins and Sandra Graham-Bermann, "Violence exposure and the development of school-related functioning: mental health, neurocognition, and learning," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 17, no. 1(2012): 89-98.
- David William Putwain and Natalie Best, "Fear appeals in the primary classroom: Effects on test anxiety and test grade," *Learning and Individual Differences* 21, no. 5 (2011): 580-584.

Practice Exercise **6.1.1**

Browse the website TheConversation.com and select an article that interests you. Read it and reflect on how it uses sources. Which of the five ways of using sources listed above best describes its approach? Next, reread it looking for sentences that stand out. Select one memorable phrase or sentence that you would quote if you were writing an essay about this piece. Explain why you chose it. Select another point that you would paraphrase and explain why that one doesn't need to be quoted.

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6.2: Introductions

Media Alternative

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"In today's world …"

Those opening words—so common in student papers—represent the most prevalent misconception about introductions: that they shouldn't really say anything substantive. The five-paragraph format that most students mastered before coming to college suggests that introductory paragraphs should start very general and gradually narrow down to the thesis. As a result, students frequently write introductions for college papers in which the first two or three (or more) sentences are patently obvious or overly broad. Charitable and well-rested instructors just skim over that text and start reading closely when they arrive at something substantive. Frustrated and overtired instructors emit a dramatic self-pitying sigh, assuming that the whole paper will be as lifeless and gassy as those first few sentences. If you've gotten into the habit of beginning opening sentences with the following phrases, firmly resolve to strike them from your repertoire right now:

- In today's world …
- Throughout human history …
- Since the dawn of time …
- Webster's Dictionary defines [CONCEPT] as …

For one thing, sentences that begin with the first three stems are often wrong. For example, someone may write, "Since the dawn of time, people have tried to increase crop yields." In reality, people have not been trying to increase crop yields throughout human history—agriculture is only about 23,000 years old, after all—and certainly not since the dawn of time (whenever that was). For another, sentences that start so broadly, even when factually correct, could not possibly end with anything interesting.

Sometimes we know that more precise and vivid intros and conclusions are ideal but still settle on the vague language that seems familiar, safe, and do-able. Knowing the general form of academic writing (simplified in the five-paragraph theme) helps writers organize their thoughts; however, it leads some student writers to approach papers as mere fill-in-the-blank exercises.

I hope you will instead envision paper-writing as a task of working through an unscripted and nuanced thought process and then sharing your work with readers. When you're engaged with the writing process, you'll find yourself deciding which substantive points belong in those introductory and concluding paragraphs rather than simply filling those paragraphs out with fluff. They should be sort of hard to write; they're the parts of the paper that express your most important ideas in the most precise ways. If you're struggling with intros and conclusions, it might be because you're approaching them in exactly the right way. Having a clear, communicative purpose will help you figure out what your reader needs to know to really understand your thinking.

So what should you do? Well, start at the beginning. By that I mean, start explaining what the reader needs to know to comprehend your thesis and its importance. For example, compare the following two paragraphs.

Five-paragraph theme version of a paragraph:

> *Throughout time, human societies have had religion. Major world religions since the dawn of civilization include Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Animism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These and all other religions provide a set of moral principles, a leadership structure, and an explanation for unknown questions such as what happens after people die. Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason. However, the notion of embodied cognition is a place where physical phenomena connect with religious ones. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an embodied cognition that empowers followers*

> *to escape from physical constraints and reach a new spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions, in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state towards spiritual transcendence.*

Organically structured version of the same paragraph:

> *Religion is an endeavor to cultivate freedom from bodily constraints to reach a higher state of being beyond the physical constraints of reality. But how is it possible to employ a system, the human body, to transcend its own limitations? Religion and science have always had an uneasy relationship as empiricism is stretched to explain religious phenomena, but psychology has recently added a new perspective to the discussion. Embodiment describes the interaction between humans and the environment that lays a foundation for cognition and can help explain the mechanisms that underlie religion's influence on believers. This is a rare moment where science and religion are able to coexist without the familiar controversy. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an embodied cognition that empowers followers to escape from physical constraints and reach a new spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions, in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state towards spiritual transcendence.*

In the first version, the first three sentences state well-known facts that do not directly relate to the thesis. The fourth sentence is where the action starts, though that sentence ("Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason") is still overstated: when was this dawn of religion? And was there "science," as we now understand it, at that time? The reader has to slog through to the fifth sentence before the intro starts to develop some momentum.

Training in the five-paragraph theme format seems to have convinced some student writers that beginning with substantive material will be too abrupt for the reader. But the second example shows that a meatier beginning isn't jarring; it is actually much more engaging. The first sentence of the organic example is somewhat general, but it specifies the particular aspect of religion (transcending physical experience) that is germane to the thesis. The next six sentences lay out the ideas and concepts that explain the thesis, which is provided in the last two sentences. Overall, every sentence is needed to thoroughly frame the thesis. It is a lively paragraph in itself, and it piques the reader's interest in the author's original thinking about religion.

Sometimes a vague introductory paragraph reflects a simple, obvious thesis and a poorly thought-out paper. More often, though, a shallow introduction represents a missed opportunity to convey the writer's depth of thought from the get-go. Students adhering to the five-paragraph theme format sometime assume that such vagueness is needed to bookend an otherwise pithy paper. As you can see from these examples, that is simply untrue. I've seen some student writers begin with a vague, high-school style intro (thinking it obligatory) and then write a wonderfully vivid and engaging introduction as their second paragraph. Other papers I've seen have an interesting, original thesis embedded in late body paragraphs that should be articulated up front and used to shape the whole body. If you must write a vague "since the dawn of time" intro to get the writing process going, then go ahead. Just budget the time to rewrite the intro around your well developed, arguable thesis and ensure that the body paragraphs are organized explicitly by your analytical thread.

Here are two more examples of excellent introductory paragraphs written by undergraduate students in different fields. Note how, in both cases, (1) the first sentence has real substance, (2) every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and (3) the thesis is complex and somewhat surprising. Both of these introductory paragraphs set an ambitious agenda for the paper. As a reader, it's pretty easy to imagine how the body paragraphs that follow will progress through the nuanced analysis needed to carry out the thesis.

From Davis O'Connell's "Abelard":

> *He rebelled against his teacher, formed his own rival school, engaged in a passionate affair with a teenager, was castrated, and became a monk. All in a day's work. Perhaps it's no surprise that Peter Abelard gained the title of "heretic" along the way. A 12th-century philosopher and theologian, Abelard tended to alienate nearly everyone he met with his extremely arrogant and egotistical personality. This very flaw is what led him to start preaching to students that he had stolen from his former master, which further deteriorated his reputation. Yet despite all of the senseless things that he did, his teachings did not differ much from Christian doctrine. Although the church claimed to have branded Abelard a heretic purely because of his religious views, the other underlying reasons for these accusations involve his conceited personality, his relationship with the 14-year-old Heloise, and the political forces of the 12th century.*

From Logan Skelly's "Staphylococcus aureus"[3]:

> *Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is causing a crisis in modern healthcare. The evolution of multi-drug resistant Staphylococcus aureus is of particular concern because of the morbidity and mortality it causes, the limited treatment options it poses, and the difficulty in implementing containment measures for its control. In order to appreciate the virulence of S. aureus and to help alleviate the problems its resistance is causing, it is important to study the evolution of antibiotic resistance in this pathogen, the mechanisms of its resistance, and the factors that may limit or counteract its evolution. It is especially important to examine how human actions are causing evolutionary changes in this bacterial species. This review will examine the historical sequence of causation that has led to antibiotic resistance in this microorganism and why natural selection favors the resistant trait. It is the goal of this review to illuminate the scope of the problem produced by antibiotic resistance in S. aureus and to illustrate the need for judicious antibiotic usage to prevent this pathogen from evolving further pathogenicity and virulence.*

If vague introductory paragraphs are bad, why were you taught them? In essence, you were taught the form so that you could later use it to deepen your thinking. By producing the five-paragraph theme over and over, it has probably become second nature for you to find a clear thesis and shape the intro paragraph around it, tasks you absolutely must accomplish in academic writing. However, you've probably been taught to proceed from "general" to "specific" in your intro and encouraged to think of "general" as "vague". At the college level, think of "general" as context: begin by explaining the conceptual, historical, or factual context that the reader needs in order to grasp the significance of the argument to come. It's not so much a structure of general-to-specific; instead, it's context-to-argument.

[1] This example is slightly adapted from a student-authored essay: Victor Seet, "Embodiment in Religion," Discoveries, 11 (2012). Discoveries is an annual publication of the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines of Cornell University which publishes excellent papers written by Cornell undergraduates.

[2] Davis O'Connell, "Abelard: A Heretic of a Different Nature," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 36-41.

[3] Logan Skelly, "Staphylococcus aureus: The Evolution of a Persistent Pathogen," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 89-102.

Exercise 6.2.1

Browse online articles on *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Medium.com, *The Atlantic*, *Time*, or other reputable websites, journals, or newspapers. Find an article where the introduction really engages you. Read the whole article, post a link to it, and reflect in your discussion post on why you found it so compelling. Did it meet the following three criteria described in this section?

If it did meet those criteria, how was the thesis surprising?

1. The first sentence has real substance,
2. Every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and
3. The thesis is complex and somewhat surprising.

Exercise 6.2.2

Choose one of the essays from Section 12.1: Suggested Short Readings. Read the whole essay and reflect in your discussion post on the introduction. Did it meet the following three criteria described in this section? If so, how was the thesis surprising?

Do you have any ideas for how it could be improved?

1. The first sentence has real substance,
2. every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and
3. the thesis is complex and somewhat surprising.

Exercise 6.2.3

Choose an essay you have written in this or another class and rewrite the introduction to improve it according to the principles in this section. Write an additional paragraph of reflection on how the new introduction would make a stronger impression on readers and better serve your purpose in the essay.

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6.3: Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement



Figure: Image from Pixabay

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea—points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

A Strong Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities.

- **Specificity.** A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.
- **Precision.** A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.
- **Ability to be argued.** A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

- **Ability to be demonstrated.** For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.
- **Forcefulness.** A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.
- **Confidence.** In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

> **Tip**
>
> Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should not contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

> **Exercise 1**
>
> On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.
>
> **Topics**
>
> - Texting while driving
> - The legal drinking age in the United States
> - Steroid use among professional athletes
> - Abortion
> - Racism

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. The societal and personal struggles of Troy Maxon in the play *Fences* symbolize the challenge of black males who lived through segregation and integration in the United States.
2. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
3. Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet* spoils the outcome for the audience and weakens the plot.
4. J. D. Salinger's character in *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, is a confused rebel who voices his disgust with phonies, yet in an effort to protect himself, he acts like a phony on many occasions.
5. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
6. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
7. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

Five Ways of Looking at a Thesis

1. A thesis creates an argument that builds from one point to the next, giving the paper a direction that the audience can follow as the paper develops.

This point often separates the best theses from the pack. A good thesis can prevent the two weakest ways of organizing a critical paper: the pile of information and the plot summary with comments. A paper that presents a pile of information will frequently introduce new paragraphs with transitions that simply indicate the addition of more stuff. ("Another character who exhibits these traits is X," for instance.) Consider these examples:

A: *The Rules* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* both tell women how to act.

B: By looking at *The Rules*, a modern conduct book for women, we can see how Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is itself like a conduct book, questioning the rules for social success in her society and offering a new model.

Example A would almost inevitably lead to a paper organized as a pile of information. A plot summary with comments follows the chronological development of a text while picking out the same element of every segment; a transition in such a paper might read, "In the next scene, the color blue also figures prominently." Both of these approaches constitute too much of a good thing. Papers must compile evidence, of course, and following the chronology of a text can sometimes help a reader keep track of a paper's argument.

The best papers, however, will develop according to a more complex logic articulated in a strong thesis. Example B above would lead a paper to organize its evidence according to the paper's own logic.

2. A thesis fits comfortably into the Magic Thesis Sentence (MTS).

The MTS: By looking at _____, we can see _____, which most readers don't see; it is important to look at this aspect of the text because _____.

Try it out with the examples from the first point:

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Notice that the MTS adds a new dimension to point number one above. The first part of the MTS asks you to find something strange ("which most readers don't see"), and the second part asks you to think about the importance of the strangeness. Thesis A would not work at all in the MTS; one could not reasonably state that "most readers [or viewers] don't see" that film's affirmation of true love, and the statement does not even attempt to explain the importance of its claim. Thesis B, on the other hand, gives us a way to complete the MTS, as in "By looking at the way fighting sticks link the plot and frame of *The Princess Bride*, we can see the way the narrator's grandson is trained in true love, which most people don't see; it is important to look at this aspect of the text because unlike the rest of the film, the fighting sticks suggest that love is not natural but socialized." One does not need to write out the MTS in such a neat one-sentence form, of course, but thinking through the structure of the MTS can help refine thesis ideas.

3. A thesis says something about the text(s) *exclusively*.

If a thesis could describe many works equally well, it needs to be more specific. Let's return to our examples from above:

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

Try substituting other works:

A: By telling the story of Darcy and Elizabeth's triumph over evil, *Pride and Prejudice* affirms the power of true love.

Sure, that makes sense. Bad sign.

B: Although the main plot of *Pride and Prejudice* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the grandson is being trained in true love, that it is not natural but socialized.



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Um, nope. Even if you have never read *Pride and Prejudice*, you can probably guess that such a precise thesis could hardly apply to other works. Good sign. The point here is that the thesis needs to be specific enough that its meaning relates to the specific

work(s) you are writing about -- be it fiction or nonfiction.

4. A thesis makes a lot of information irrelevant.

If the thesis is specific enough, it will make a point that focuses on only a small part of the text be analyzed or a particular aspect of a larger topic. A writer should ultimately apply that point to the work as a whole, but a thesis will call attention to specific parts of it. Let's look at those examples again. (This is the last time, I promise.)

A: By telling the story of Wesley and Buttercup's triumph over evil, *The Princess Bride* affirms the power of true love.

B: Although the main plot of *The Princess Bride* rests on the natural power of true love, an examination of the way that fighting sticks–baseball bats, tree branches, and swords–link the frame story to the romance plot suggests that the narrator's grandson is being trained in true love, that love is not natural but socialized.

One way of spotting the problem with Example A is to note that a simple plot summary would support its point. That is not of true example B, which tells the reader exactly what moments the paper will be discussed and why. The thesis is focused and concentrated.

5. Remember to Address the Work as a Whole: The "So What?"

As you complete your analysis, remember to think about what the effect this will have on the world of academia.

- Does your thesis introduce your topic in a clear way?
- Does the introduction mention what you will be addressing? Social constructs, gender issues, etc.

Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is "What is the big idea?" (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

> **Tip**
>
> For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself, "How many pages will it take for me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?" Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

Developing Thesis Statements from Topics

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a thesis statement. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

Table 5.1 "Topics and Thesis Statements" compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 5.1 Topics and Thesis Statements

Topic	Thesis Statement
Music piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers are increasing their share of the market.	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.
Online education and the new media	Someday, students and teachers will send avatars to their online classrooms.

The first thesis statement you write will be a preliminary thesis statement, or a working thesis statement. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

Exercise 2

Using the topic you selected in Section 4.6 "Prewriting Strategies", develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

Tip

You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly. Sometimes, this refinement of the thesis statement happens after your write your first draft of the paper.

Guidelines for Drafting a Thesis Statement

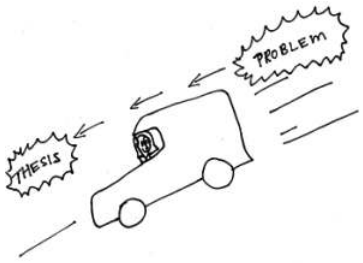


Figure: from Amazon AWS.

It helps to understand why readers value the arguable thesis. What larger purpose does it serve? Readers will bring a set of expectations to an essay. If writers can anticipate the expectations of their readers, the better they will be able to persuade the audience to find the arguments convincing, interesting, and relevant.

Academic readers (and readers more generally) read to learn something new. They want to see the writer challenge commonplaces —either everyday assumptions about the object of study or truisms in the scholarly literature. In other words, academic readers want to be surprised so that their thinking shifts or at least becomes more complex by the time they finish reading an essay. Good essays problematize what we think we know and offer an alternative explanation in its place. They leave their reader with a fresh perspective on a problem.

We all bring important past experiences and beliefs to our interpretations of texts, objects, and problems. Writers can harness these observational powers to engage critically with what they are studying. The key is to be alert to what strikes you as strange, problematic, paradoxical, or puzzling about your topic. If writers can articulate this and a claim in response, they are well on their way to formulating an arguable thesis in the introduction.

How do I set up a "problem" and an arguable thesis in response?

All good writing has a purpose or motive for existing. The thesis is the writer's surprising response to this problem or motive. This is why it seldom makes sense to start a writing project by articulating the thesis. The first step is to articulate the question or problem your paper addresses.



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Here are some possible ways to introduce a conceptual problem in your paper's introduction.

1. Challenge a commonplace interpretation (or your own first impressions).



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

How are readers likely to interpret this source or issue? What might intelligent readers think at first glance? (Or, if you've been given secondary sources or have been asked to conduct research to locate secondary sources, what do other writers or scholars assume is true or important about your primary source or issue?)

What does this commonplace interpretation leave out, overlook, or under-emphasize?

2. Help the reader see the complexity of your topic.

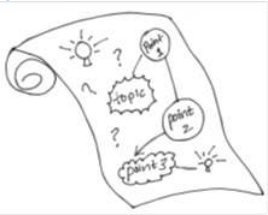


Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Identify and describe for the reader a paradox, puzzle, or contradiction in a primary source(s).

What larger questions does this paradox or contradiction raise for readers?

3. If research is part of the assignment, piggyback off another scholar's research.



Figure: Summarize another scholar's argument about the topic, primary source, or case study and explain to the reader why this claim is interesting and explain how the claim will extend this scholar's argument to explore an issue or case study that the scholar doesn't address fully.

4. If research is part of the assignment, identify a gap in another scholar's or a group of scholars' research.



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Summarize another scholar's argument about your topic, primary source, or case study and explain to the reader why this claim is interesting. Or, summarize how scholars in the field tend to approach the topic.

Next, explain what important aspect this scholarly representation misses or distorts. Introduce the particular approach to the topic and its value.

5. If research is part of the assignment, bring in a new lens for investigating the case study or problem.



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Summarize how a scholar or group of scholars has approached the topic.

Introduce a theoretical source (possibly from another discipline) and explain how it helps to address this issue from a new and productive angle.

Tip: your introductory paragraph will probably look like this:



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Testing Your Thesis

Test a thesis statement's arguability by asking the following questions:

1) Does the thesis only or mostly summarize a source?

If so, try some of the exercises above to articulate the paper's conceptual problem or question.

2) Is the thesis arguable – can it be supported by evidence, and is it surprising and contentious?

If not, return to the sources and practice the exercises above.

3) Is the thesis about the primary source, or is it about the world?

If it's about the world, revise it so that it focuses on primary source(s). Remember to include solid evidence to support the thesis.

"THREE-STORY THESIS STATEMENTS" BY AMY GUPTIL

How do you produce a good, strong thesis? And how do you know when you've gotten there? Many instructors and writers find useful a metaphor based on this passage by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.:[3]

> *There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects, and three-story intellects with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize using the labor of fact collectors as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict—their best illumination comes from above the skylight.*

One-story theses state inarguable facts. Two-story theses bring in an arguable (interpretive or analytical) point. Three-story theses nest that point within its larger, compelling implications. [4]

The biggest benefit of the three-story metaphor is that it describes a process for building a thesis. To build the first story, you first have to get familiar with the complex, relevant facts surrounding the problem or question. You have to be able to describe the situation thoroughly and accurately. Then, with that first story built, you can layer on the second story by formulating the insightful, arguable point that animates the analysis. That's often the most effortful part: brainstorming, elaborating and comparing alternative ideas, finalizing your point. With that specified, you can frame up the third story by articulating why the point you make matters beyond its particular topic or case.

Thesis: that's the word that pops at me whenever I write an essay. Seeing this word in the prompt scared me and made me think to myself, "Oh great, what are they really looking for?" or "How am I going to make a thesis for a college paper?" When rehearing that I would be focusing on theses again in a class, I said to myself, "Here we go again!" But after learning about the three story thesis, I never had a problem with writing another thesis. In fact, I look forward to being asked on a paper to create a thesis.

Timothée Pizarro

For example, imagine you have been assigned a paper about the impact of online learning in higher education. You would first construct an account of the origins and multiple forms of online learning and assess research findings about its use and effectiveness. If you've done that well, you'll probably come up with a well considered opinion that wouldn't be obvious to readers who haven't looked at the issue in depth. Maybe you'll want to argue that online learning is a threat to the academic community. Or perhaps you'll want to make the case that online learning opens up pathways to college degrees that traditional campus-based learning does not. In the course of developing your central, argumentative point, you'll come to recognize its larger context; in this example, you may claim that online learning can serve to better integrate higher education with the rest of society, as online learners bring their educational and career experiences together. To outline this example:

- *First story*: Online learning is becoming more prevalent and takes many different forms.
- *Second story*: While most observers see it as a *transformation* of higher education, online learning is better thought of an *extension* of higher education in that it reaches learners who aren't disposed to participate in traditional campus-based education.
- *Third story*: Online learning appears to be a promising way to better integrate higher education with other institutions in society, as online learners integrate their educational experiences with the other realms of their life, promoting the freer flow of ideas between the academy and the rest of society.

Here's another example of a three-story thesis:[5]

- *First story*: Edith Wharton did not consider herself a modernist writer, and she didn't write like her modernist contemporaries.
- *Second story*: However, in her work we can see her grappling with both the questions and literary forms that fascinated modernist writers of her era. While not an avowed modernist, she did engage with modernist themes and questions.
- *Third story*: Thus, it is more revealing to think of modernism as a conversation rather than a category or practice.

Here's one more example:

- *First story*: Scientists disagree about the likely impact in the U.S. of the light brown apple moth (LBAM), an agricultural pest native to Australia.
- *Second story*: Research findings to date suggest that the decision to spray pheromones over the skies of several southern Californian counties to combat the LBAM was poorly thought out.
- *Third story*: Together, the scientific ambiguities and the controversial response strengthen the claim that industrial-style approaches to pest management are inherently unsustainable.

A thesis statement that stops at the first story isn't usually considered a thesis. A two-story thesis is usually considered competent, though some two-story theses are more intriguing and ambitious than others. A thoughtfully crafted and well informed three-story thesis puts the author on a smooth path toward an excellent paper.

The concept of a three-story thesis framework was the most helpful piece of information I gained from the writing component of DCC 100. The first time I utilized it in a college paper, my professor included "good thesis" and "excellent introduction" in her notes and graded it significantly higher than my previous papers. You can expect similar results if you dig deeper to form three-story theses. More importantly, doing so will make the actual writing of your paper more straightforward as well. Arguing something specific makes the structure of your paper much easier to design.

Peter Farrell

Effective Thesis Statements

As mentioned before, a thesis statement is the controlling idea of your essay. It is the main idea that all of the other sentences in the essay relate to. After gathering information about your topic, you need to figure out what you want to say about it.

An effective thesis statement has two major characteristics.

1. An effective thesis statement makes a point about a topic. For this reason, it must do more than state a fact or announce what you plan to write about.

Statement of fact: The military recruits students in high schools.

Announcement: In this essay, I would like to discuss what's wrong with military recruitment in high schools.

List thesis: We should not allow the military to recruit in high schools because recruiters violate privacy, manipulate naïve young people, and target low-income youth.

Effective thesis: We should end the abusive and discriminatory practice of military recruitment in high schools.

A statement of fact is not an effective thesis statement because it does not take a position, giving you nothing to develop in your essay. Likewise, an announcement of what you plan to write about in your essay does not take a position on the issue, leaving you with nothing to develop. A good thesis statement makes a claim that is arguable.

2. The most effective thesis statements do not list your main points but unite your main points into a larger, central idea.
The list thesis above looks strong, but notice how the effective thesis connects the three points with the words "abusive" and "discriminatory." Now we know how the three points relate to each other; they are more than just a list.

To turn three or four "reasons" or topic sentences into a thesis, consider what they have in common and what your overall point is.

> Tip
>
> You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, coworkers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

  Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

  Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across America are trying to legislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

  Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

  Weak thesis statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

> Exercise 3
>
> Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.
>
> 1. The subject of this paper is my experience with ferrets as pets.
> 2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
> 3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
> 4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
> 5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
> 6. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
> 7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Writing at Work

Often in your career, you will need to ask your manager for something through an e-mail. Just as a thesis statement organizes an essay, it can also organize your e-mail request. While your e-mail will be shorter than an essay, using a thesis statement in your first paragraph quickly lets your manager know what you are asking for, why it is necessary, and what the benefits are. In short body paragraphs, you can provide the essential information needed to expand upon your request.

Thesis Statement Revision

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Remember from Chapter 4 that your thesis statement begins as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

Tip

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Ways to Revise Your Thesis

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus their research and gain more direction in their writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*. The writer should ask himself or herself questions similar to the 5WH questions. (See Chapter 4.6 "Prewriting Strategies" for more information on the 5WH questions.) By incorporating the answers to these questions into a thesis statement, the writer more accurately defines his or her stance, which will better guide the writing of the essay.

3. Replace any linking verbs with action verbs. Linking verbs are forms of the verb *to be*, a verb that simply states that a situation exists.

Working thesis: Kansas City schoolteachers are not paid enough.

Revised thesis: Kansas City cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, “Why are they not paid enough?” But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself or herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered “enough”?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results

Exercise 4

In an earlier section you determined your purpose for writing and your audience. You then completed a free writing exercise about an event you recently experienced and chose a general topic to write about. Using that general topic, you then narrowed it down by answering the 5WH questions. After you answered these questions, you chose one of the three methods of prewriting and gathered possible supporting points for your working thesis statement.

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write down your working thesis statement. Identify any weaknesses in this sentence and revise the statement to reflect the elements of a strong thesis statement. Make sure it is specific, precise, arguable, demonstrable, forceful, and confident.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In your career you may have to write a project proposal that focuses on a particular problem in your company, such as reinforcing the tardiness policy. The proposal would aim to fix the problem; using a thesis statement would clearly state the boundaries of the problem and tell the goals of the project. After writing the proposal, you may find that the thesis needs revision to reflect exactly what is expressed in the body. Using the techniques from this chapter would apply to revising that thesis.

Video



Video 6.3.1

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6.4: Topic Sentences



Figure: Image from Pixabay

Now that you have identified common purposes for writing, learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, and written a working thesis (at least) you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. **Topic sentence.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Body.** The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. **Conclusion.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay and guides the reader by sign-posting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

Topic Sentences

In academic writing, readers expect each paragraph to have a sentence or two that captures its main point. They're often called "topic sentences" or "main ideas." Don't be fooled by the phrase "topic sentence" though. It makes it seem like sentence's job is simply to announce the topic of the paragraph. Rather think about the topic sentence for the paragraph in the same way you think about the thesis statement for the essay as a whole (see "Thesis Statements"). Sometimes topic sentence will also include a transition from the previous paragraph, but not always. A topic sentence should never simply be a transition.

Consider these two examples: [2]

Version A: *Now we turn to the epidemiological evidence.*

Version B: *The epidemiological evidence provides compelling support for the hypothesis emerging from etiological studies.*

Both versions convey a topic; it's pretty easy to predict that the paragraph will be about epidemiological evidence, but only the second version establishes an argumentative point and puts it in context. The paragraph doesn't just describe the epidemiological evidence; it shows how epidemiology is telling the same story as etiology. Similarly, while Version A doesn't relate to anything in particular, Version B immediately suggests that the prior paragraph addresses the biological pathway (i.e. etiology) of a disease and that the new paragraph will bolster the emerging hypothesis with a different kind of evidence. As a reader, it's easy to keep track of how the paragraph about cells and chemicals and such relates to the paragraph about populations in different places.

By clearly establishing an essential point within its analytic context, a well written topic sentence gives both you and your reader a firm grasp of how each point relates. For example, compare these two sets of topic sentences, each introducing a sequential paragraph[3]:

Set A:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear. …

The cause of AIDS is HIV.

There are skeptics who question whether HIV is the cause.

Set B:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, the cause of the disease was unclear, leading to a broad range of scientific speculation.

By 1986 HIV had been isolated and found to correlate almost exactly with the incidence of AIDS.

HIV skeptics, on the other hand, sought to discredit claims based on epidemiology by emphasizing that the pathogenesis of HIV was still unknown.

Set A isn't wrong per se; it just illustrates a lost opportunity to show the important connections among points. Both versions portray a process unfolding over time: initial uncertainty followed by a breakthrough discovery and then controversy. Even with the same substantive points, a person reading Version A would have to work harder to see how the material in the paragraphs connects. Readers experience Version B as clearer and more engaging.

Thinking of topic sentences as sequential points in an argument reminds one that a key sentence doesn't have to always be a single declarative one. Sometimes you need two sentences together to achieve the work of a topic sentence, and sometimes a question or quotation does a better job than a declarative sentence in clarifying a logical sequence, which brings us to Set C.

Set C:

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic the cause was unclear. Virologists, bacteriologists, immunologists, and epidemiologists all pursued different leads, reflecting their particular areas of expertise.

If drug use, lifestyle, and "immune overload" didn't cause AIDS, what did?

"I've asked questions they apparently can't answer," claimed retrovirologist Peter Duesberg[4] who became an oft-quoted skeptical voice in media accounts of AIDS research in the mid-1980s.

Set C is based on the same three sequential points as Sets A and B: (1) the cause of AIDS was initially unclear (2) HIV was accepted as the cause (3) lone dissenters questioned the claims. However, sets B and C have much more meaning and momentum, and set C, depending on the nature of the argument, features more precise and lively stylistic choices. Opening the second paragraph with a question (that then gets answered) carries forth the sense of befuddlement that researchers initially experienced and helps to convey why the discovery of HIV was a hugely important turning point. Using the self-glorifying Duesberg quote to launch the third paragraph makes the point about lingering skepticism while also introducing a portrait of a leading figure among the skeptics. While Set B is effective as well, Set C illustrates some of the more lively choices available to academic writers.

A last thing to note about topic sentences is that academic readers expect them to be at the beginning of the paragraph.[5] That helps readers comprehend your argument. To see how, try this: find an academic piece (such as a textbook or scholarly article) that strikes you as well written and go through part of it reading just the first sentence of each paragraph. You should be able to easily follow the sequence of logic. When you're writing for professors, it is especially effective to put your key sentences first because they usually convey your own original thinking, which, as you've read here, is exactly what your instructors are looking for in your work. It's a very good sign when your paragraphs are typically composed of a telling key sentence followed by evidence and explanation.

> Writing at Work
>
> In the work world, people can be very busy and may not have time to read all the details of a proposal you might make. For this reason, in business writing, people want to know your point up front and then, if they want to look at your reasoning or support, they will read further. Just as in academic writing, in business writing, the reader should be able to read the first sentence of each paragraph and follow your logical thinking and reasoning.

Knowing this convention of academic writing can help you both read and write more effectively. When you're reading a complicated academic piece for the first time, you might want to go through reading only the first sentence or two of each paragraph to get the overall outline of the argument. Then you can go back and read all of it with a clearer picture of how each of the details fit in.[6] And when you're writing, you may also find it useful to write the first sentence of each paragraph (instead of a topic-based outline) to map out a thorough argument before getting immersed in sentence-level wordsmithing. For example, compare these two scaffolds. Which one would launch you into a smoother drafting process?:[7]

Version A (Topic Outline):

I. Granovetter's "Strength of weak ties"

A. Definition

B. Example—getting jobs

II. Creativity in social networks

A. Explanation

B. Richard Florida's argument

III. Implications

A. For urban planners

B. For institutions of higher education

Version B (Key-Sentence Sketch):

The importance of networking for both career development and social change is well known. Granovetter (1973) explains that weak ties—that is, ties among acquaintances—are often more useful in job hunting because they connect job-seekers to a broader range of people and workplaces. …

Subsequent research in network analysis has shown that weak ties can promote creativity by bringing ideas together from different social realms. …

Richard Florida (2002) argues that cities would do well to facilitate weak ties in order to recruit members of the "creative class" and spur economic development. …

Florida's argument can inspire a powerful new approach to strategic planning within colleges and universities as well. …

As you can see, emphasizing key sentences in both the process and product of academic writing is one way to ensure that your efforts stay focused on developing your argument and communicating your own original thinking in a clear, logical way.



Topic versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus, a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The anti-nausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

Although the topic—marijuana—is the same in all three topic sentences, the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

Exercise 1

Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea in each of the following topic sentences.

1. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health.
2. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today's workplace.
3. Raising the legal driving age to twenty-one would decrease road traffic accidents.
4. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.
5. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

   Weak example. People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)

   Stronger example. During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.

   Weak example. In this paragraph, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea.)

   Stronger example. The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer's opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

   Weak example. In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types. (This topic sentence includes a topic and a controlling idea, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

   Stronger example. Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

   Weak example. Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)

   Stronger example. Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

   Weak example. The military deserves better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a topic and a controlling idea, but the language is bland and unexciting.)

   Stronger example. The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

Exercise 2

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.

   b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.

2. a. The unrealistic demands of multi-national corporations are crippling workers' ability to achieve the American Dream.

b. Multi-national corporations are crippling the economy because their workers are unable to balance work and personal lives.

3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.

   b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.

4. a. Heavy metal is outdated and radio stations should stop playing it.

   b. Here is why radio stations should stop playing heavy metal.

Exercise 3

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a topic. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species

   _____

2. The cost of fuel

   _____

3. The legal drinking age

   _____

4. A controversial film or novel

   _____

Writing at Work

When creating a workplace document, use the "top-down" approach—keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each section with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

> Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment, stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Tip

Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

Exercise 4

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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6.5: Conclusions

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (9 min, 28 sec):

0:00 / 9:28

Strong conclusions do two things: they bring the argument to a satisfying close and they explain some of the most important implications. You've probably been taught to re-state your thesis using different words, and it is true that your reader will likely appreciate a brief summary of your overall argument: say, two or three sentences for papers less than 20 pages. It's perfectly fine to use what they call "metadiscourse" in this summary; metadiscourse is text like, "I have argued that …" or "This analysis reveals that … ." Go ahead and use language like that if it seems useful to signal that you're restating the main points of your argument. In shorter papers you can usually simply reiterate the main point without that metadiscourse: for example, "What began as a protest about pollution turned into a movement for civil rights." If that's the crux of the argument, your reader will recognize a summary like that. Most of the student papers I see close the argument effectively in the concluding paragraph.

The second task of a conclusion—situating the argument within broader implications—is a lot trickier. A lot of instructors describe it as the "So what?" challenge. You've proven your point about the role of agriculture in deepening the Great Depression; so what? I don't like the "so what" phrasing because putting writers on the defensive seems more likely to inhibit the flow of ideas than to draw them out. Instead, I suggest you imagine a friendly reader thinking, "OK, you've convinced me of your argument. I'm interested to know what you make of this conclusion. What is or should be different now that your thesis is proven?" In that sense, your reader is asking you to take your analysis one step further. That's why a good conclusion is challenging to write. You're not just coasting over the finish line.

So, how do you do that? A thesis can situate an arguable claim within broader implications. If you've already articulated a thesis statement that does that, then you've already mapped the terrain of the conclusion. Your task then is to explain the implications you mentioned: if environmental justice really is the new civil rights movement, then how should scholars and/or activists approach it? If agricultural trends really did worsen the Great Depression, what does that mean for agricultural policy today? If your thesis, as written, is a two-story one, then you may want to revisit it after you've developed a conclusion you're satisfied with and consider including the key implication in that thesis statement. Doing so will give your paper even more momentum.

Let's look at the concluding counterparts to the excellent introductions that we've read to illustrate some of the different ways writers can accomplish the two goals of a conclusion:

Victor Seet on religious embodiment:[1]

> *Embodiment is fundamental to bridging reality and spirituality. The concept demonstrates how religious practice synthesizes human experience in reality—mind, body, and environment—to embed a cohesive religious experience that can recreate itself. Although religion is ostensibly focused on an intangible spiritual world, its traditions that eventually achieve spiritual advancement are grounded in reality. The texts, symbols, and rituals integral to religious practice go beyond merely distinguishing one faith from another; they serve to fully absorb individuals in a culture that sustains common experiential knowledge shared by millions. It is important to remember that human senses do not merely act as sponges absorbing external information; our mental models of the world are being constantly refined with new experiences. This fluid process allows individuals to gradually accumulate a wealth of religious multimodal information, making the mental representation hyper-sensitive, which in turn contributes to religious experiences. However, there is an important caveat. Many features of religious visions*

> *that are attributed to embodiment can also be explained through less complex cognitive mechanisms. The repetition from religious traditions exercised both physically and mentally, naturally inculcates a greater religious awareness simply through familiarity. Religious experiences are therefore not necessarily caused by embedded cues within the environment but arise from an imbued fluency with religious themes. Embodiment proposes a connection between body, mind, and the environment that attempts to explain how spiritual transcendence is achieved through physical reality. Although embodied cognition assuages the conflict between science and religion, it remains to be seen if this intricate scientific theory is able to endure throughout millennia just as religious beliefs have.*

The paragraph first re-caps the argument, then explains how embodiment relates to other aspects of religious experience, and finally situates the analysis within the broader relationship between religion and science.

From Davis O'Connell:[2]

> *Looking at Abelard through the modern historical lens, it appears to many historians that he did not fit the 12th-century definition of a heretic in the sense that his teachings did not differ much from that of the church. Mews observes that Abelard's conception of the Trinity was a continuation of what earlier Christian leaders had already begun to ponder. He writes: "In identifying the Son and Holy Spirit with the wisdom and benignity of God, Abelard was simply extending an idea (based on Augustine) that had previously been raised by William of Champeaux." St. Augustine was seen as one of the main Christian authorities during the Middle Ages and for Abelard to derive his teachings from that source enhances his credibility. This would indicate that although Abelard was not necessarily a heretic by the church's official definition, he was branded as one through all of the nontheological social and political connotations that "heresy" had come to encompass.*

O'Connell, interestingly, chooses a scholarly tone for the conclusion, in contrast to the more jocular tone we saw in the introduction. He doesn't specifically re-cap the argument about Abelard's deviance from social norms and political pressures, but rather he explains his summative point about what it means to be a heretic. In this case, the implications of the argument are all about Abelard. There aren't any grand statements about religion and society, the craft of historiography, or the politics of language. Still, the reader is not left hanging. One doesn't need to make far-reaching statements to successfully conclude a paper.

From Logan Skelly:[3]

> *Considering the hundreds of millions of years that S. aureus has been evolving and adapting to hostile environments, it is likely that the past seventy years of human antibiotic usage represents little more than a minor nuisance to these bacteria. Antibiotic resistance for humans, however, contributes to worldwide health, economic, and environmental problems. Multi-drug resistant S. aureus has proven itself to be a versatile and persistent pathogen that will likely continue to evolve as long as selective pressures, such as antibiotics, are introduced into the environment. While the problems associated with S. aureus have received ample attention in the scientific literature, there has been little resolution of the problems this pathogen poses. If these problems are to be resolved, it is essential that infection control measures and effective treatment strategies be developed, adopted, and implemented in the future on a worldwide scale—so that the*

> *evolution of this pathogen's virulence can be curtailed and its pathogenicity can be controlled.*

Skelly's thesis is about the need to regulate antibiotic usage to mitigate antibiotic resistance. The concluding paragraph characterizes the pathogens evolutionary history (without re-capping the specifics) and then calls for an informed, well planned, and comprehensive response.

All three conclusions above achieve both tasks—closing the argument and addressing the implications—but the authors have placed a different emphasis on the two tasks and framed the broader implications in different ways. Writing, like any craft, challenges the creator to make these kinds of independent choices. There isn't a standard recipe for a good conclusion.

[1] This example is slightly adapted from a student-authored essay: Victor Seet, "Embodiment in Religion," Discoveries, 11 (2012). Discoveries is an annual publication of the Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines of Cornell University which publishes excellent papers written by Cornell undergraduates.

[2] Davis O'Connell, "Abelard: A Heretic of a Different Nature," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 36-41.

[3] Logan Skelly, "Staphylococcus aureus: The Evolution of a Persistent Pathogen," *Discoveries* 10 (2011): 89-102.

Practice exercise

1. Choose one of the suggested short essays presented in this book. Read the whole essay and reflect in your discussion post on the conclusion:
   a) Which words did it use to repeat the thesis and other main ideas? Did it contain too much or too little summary of these for your taste?
   b) How did it answer the "So what?" question and described some meaningful implications of the essay's main ideas? Do you think it could have added or clarified anything to increase its impact on the reader?

2. Choose an essay you have written in this or another class and rewrite the conclusion to improve it according to the principles in this section. Write an additional paragraph of reflection on how the new conclusion would make a stronger impression on readers and better serve your purpose in the essay.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

6.6: Body Paragraphs

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6.7: Writing the Essay Draft

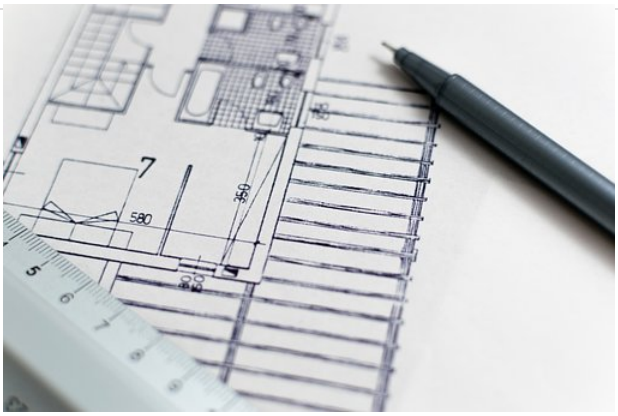


Figure: Image from Pixabay

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing.

Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have hours of prewriting and planning already done. You know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

Getting Started

Your objective here is to draft the body paragraphs of your essay. Although in college you generally want to move beyond the five-paragraph essay you probably learned in high school, we will review the basics. A five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking. In this lesson, Andi does all their work on the computer, but you may use pen and paper or the computer to write a rough draft.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

What makes viewing writing as a process so beneficial to writers is that it encourages alternative strategies and processes to the standard step-by-step view of writing while motivating you to develop your best ideas. For instance, the following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in your writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about.** You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs that are between one-half and three-fourth of a page, double spaced.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop.** As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind.** This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multi-page report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write. One tip that writer Stephen King suggests in his book, *On Writing*, is to stop in the middle of a paragraph so you can keep going with what's already in your head at your next sitting without sitting and staring at the screen.
- **Be reasonable with your goals.** If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write.** These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, you will, for example, present your facts and details in the most logical and

convincing way you can.

Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

Tip

You may want to identify your purpose and audience on an index card or write on sticky notes that you clip or stick to your paper (or keep next to your computer). On that card, you may want to write notes to yourself—perhaps about what that audience might not know or what it needs to know—so that you will be sure to address those issues when you write. It may be a good idea to also state exactly what you want to explain to that audience, or to inform them of, or to persuade them about.

Writing at Work

Many of the documents you produce at work target a particular audience for a particular purpose. You may find that it is highly advantageous to know as much as you can about your target audience and to prepare your message to reach that audience, even if the audience is a coworker or your boss. Menu language is a common example. Descriptions like “organic romaine” and “free-range chicken” are intended to appeal to a certain type of customer though perhaps not to the same customer who craves a thick steak. Similarly, mail-order companies research the demographics of the people who buy their merchandise. Successful vendors customize product descriptions in catalogs to appeal to their buyers’ tastes. For example, the product descriptions in a skateboarder catalog will differ from the descriptions in a clothing catalog for mature adults.

Exercise 1

Using the topic for the essay that you outlined in Section 4.7, describe your purpose and your audience as specifically as you can. Use your own sheet of paper to record your responses. Then keep these responses near you during future stages of the writing process.

My purpose: _____

_____

_____

My audience: _____

_____

_____

Setting Goals for Your First Draft

A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising. During revising, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

Writing at Work

Workplace writing in certain environments is done by teams of writers who collaborate on the planning, writing, and revision of documents, such as long reports, technical manuals, and the results of scientific research. Collaborators do not need to be in the same room, the same building, or even the same city. Many collaborations are conducted over the Internet.

In a perfect collaboration, each contributor has the right to add, edit, and delete text. Strong communication skills, in addition to strong writing skills, are important in this kind of writing situation because disagreements over style, content, process, emphasis, and other issues may arise.

The collaborative software, or document management systems, that groups use to work on common projects is sometimes called groupware or workgroup support systems. New, improved programs are continually being developed.

The reviewing tool on some word-processing programs also gives you access to a collaborative tool that many smaller workgroups use when they exchange documents. You can also use it to leave comments to yourself.

> **Tip**
>
> If you invest some time now to investigate how the reviewing tool in your word processor works, you will be able to use it with confidence during the revision stage of the writing process. Then, when you start to revise, set your reviewing tool to track any changes you make, so you will be able to tinker with text and commit only those final changes you want to keep.

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this and the previous chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you already have both a formal topic outline and a formal sentence outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An introduction that piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading;
- A *thesis statement* that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing;
- A topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement;
- Supporting sentences in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence; these can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence; and
- A conclusion that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format--introduction, body with multiple paragraphs, and conclusion--is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones. For now, however, Andi focuses on writing the three body paragraphs from their outline. Section 5.4, "Introduction and Conclusion Paragraphs" covers writing introductions and conclusions, and you will read Andi's introduction and conclusion there.

The Role of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer's basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph even if it the first item in your formal outline (though it should be in workplace writing).

> **Tip**
>
> When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

The topic sentence is generally the first or final sentence in a paragraph. It's possible that it can appear in the middle, but that can be confusing for a reader. Many times it appears as the second sentence in a paragraph is a transition sentence precedes it. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs.

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on whether you are including counter-arguments. The placement of a topic sentence may vary from paragraph to paragraph depending on the purpose of that particular paragraph and the relation between that purpose and the audience. Please see Section 2.6, "Rhetorical Analysis," and Section 6.1, "Strategies for Developing Paragraphs."

> **Tip**
>
> As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. You may discover topic sentences that are not always located at the beginning of a paragraph. For example, fiction writers customarily use topic ideas, either expressed or implied, to move readers through their texts. In nonfiction writing, such as popular magazines, topic sentences are often used when the author thinks it is appropriate (based on the audience and the purpose, of course). A single topic sentence might even control the development of a number of paragraphs. For more information on topic sentences, please see Chapter 6.

Paragraphs

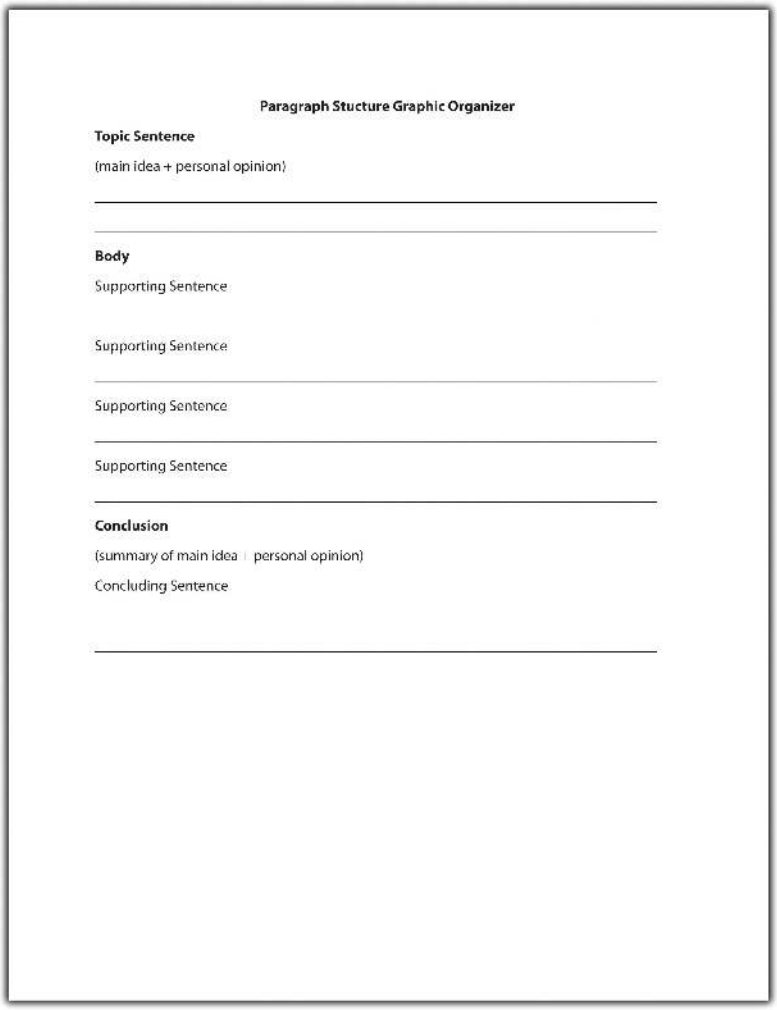
Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have a guideline for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic

sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence. This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words. Figure 5.3.1 shows one graphic organizer for paragraph structure.

Figure 5.3.1



Let's look at a fairly casual example. Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> After reading the new TV Guide this week, I had just one thought—why are we still being bombarded with reality shows? This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog—stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality

television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, which had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its person is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

This is an inductive paragraph. It begins with details that lead to the point, or main idea. The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes, the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety—breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the topic sentence expresses the main idea—that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic. You might need to break apart two ideas and develop them separately into two different paragraphs.

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis. For more specific help on developing body paragraphs, please see Section 6.1, "Developing Body Paragraphs."

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be?

One answer to this important question may be "long enough"—long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable -- and even encouraged-- in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs between one-half and three-fourths of a double-spaced page.

> **Tip**
>
> Journalistic style often calls for brief two- or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what you instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Generally, instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

Exercise 2

To build your sense of appropriate paragraph length, use the Internet to find examples of the following items. Copy them into a file, identify your sources, and present them to your instructor with your annotations, or notes.

- A news article written in short paragraphs. Take notes on, or annotate, your selection with your observations about the effect of combining paragraphs that develop the same topic idea. Explain how effective those paragraphs would be.
- A long paragraph from a scholarly work that you identify through an academic search engine. Annotate it with your observations about the author's paragraphing style.

Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over Andi's shoulder as they begin to write their essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. Follow along with your own outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Andi in the proper mind-set to start.

The following is Mariah's thesis statement:

> *Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*

Here are the notes that Andi wrote to themselves to characterize their purpose and audience.

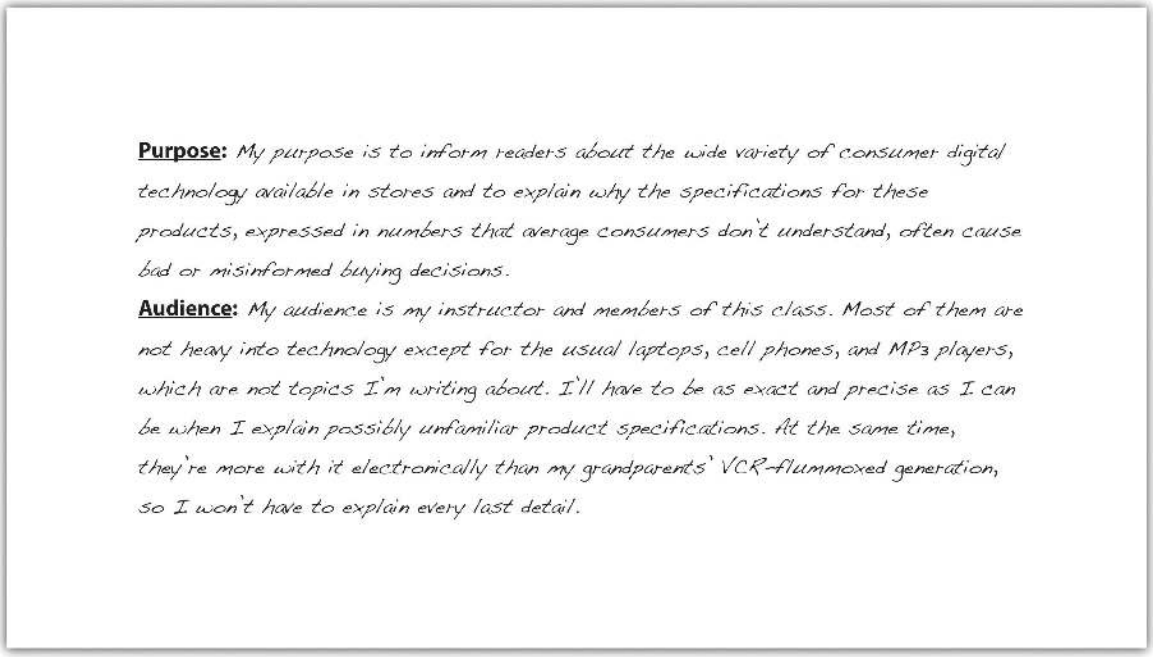


Figure: Andi chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on their thesis statement, knowing they would improve it during the revision process. Right now, this will just give them a starting point.

Andi then looked at their key sentence outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of their outline for the first body paragraph. The Roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label subpoints.

II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.

A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.

1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.

B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.

1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.

C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.

1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries

Figure: Andi then began to expand the ideas in the outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped guarantee that all their sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.

E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose. Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

Tip

If you write your first draft on the computer, consider creating a new file folder for each course with a set of subfolders inside the course folders for each assignment you are given. Label the folders clearly with the course names, and label each assignment folder and word processing document with a title that you will easily recognize. The assignment name is a good choice for the document. Then use that subfolder to store all the drafts you create. When you start each new draft, do not just write over the last one. Instead, save the draft with a new tag after the title—draft 1, draft 2, and so on—so that you will have a

complete history of drafts in case your instructor wishes you to submit them. Also, it can be a good idea to use a program, such as Google docs, that stores your files in the cloud. That way, you will still have access to your documents in case something happens to your computer. However, because these many times overwrite your previous work, and the internet or WiFi could have problems, it's also good to save each draft with a separate number on it both in the cloud and on your personal computer.

In your documents, observe any formatting requirements (such as MLA formatting) for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.

Continuing the First Draft

Andi continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. They had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in ther outline, so they had to consult the prewriting notes for specific information to include.

Tip

If you decide to take a break between finishing your first body paragraph and starting the next one, do not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written. If you stop writing in the middle of writing the paragraph, she could have jotted down some quick notes to herself about what she would write next.

Preceding each body paragraph that Andi wrote is the appropriate section of their sentence outline. Notice how they expanded Roman numeral III from the outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely they stayed on purpose and how well they paid attention to the needs of the audience.

III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.

A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.

1. Compact digital cameras are light but lack the megapixels.
2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large but can be used for many functions.
3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.

B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel wars."

C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.

Figure:

Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras in amateur photographers' gadget bags. My father took hundreds of slides when his children were growing up, but he had more and more trouble getting them developed. So, he decided to go modern. But, what kind of camera should he buy? The small compact digital cameras could slip right in his pocket, but if he tried to print a photograph larger than an 8 x 10, the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were as versatile as his old film camera, also an SLR, but they were big and bulky. Then he discovered yet a third type, which combined the smaller size of the compact digital cameras with the zoom lenses available for SLRs. His first thought was to buy one of those, but then he realized he had a lot of decisions to make. How many megapixels should the camera be? Five? Ten? What is the advantage of each? Then came the size of the zoom lens. He knew that 3x was too small, but what about 25x? Could he hold a lens that long without causing camera shake? He read hundreds of photography magazines and buying guides, and he still wasn't sure he was right.

Andi then began the third and final body paragraph using Roman numeral IV from her outline.

IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.

A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?

B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?

C. Does every home really need a media center?

Figure:

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need

Exercise 3

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that Andi is writing. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In body paragraph two, Andi decided to develop the paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with their decision? Explain. How else could they have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?
2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that Andi was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give them? Why?
3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits Andi's audience and purpose.

Writing a Title

A writer's best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Do not make your title the type of assignment your teacher assigned. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

After carefully crafting each paragraph of their essay, based on the outline, Andi finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph. They then decided, as the final touch for the writing session, to add an engaging title.



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6.8: Definition Arguments

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What is a definition argument?

A research-based argument may have as its goal to describe the nature of something, whether it be an abstract concept like justice, a historical event, or an ongoing trend. Definition arguments like this are arguments because they seek to shape our vision of reality. We can think of them as answering the question "What is it?"

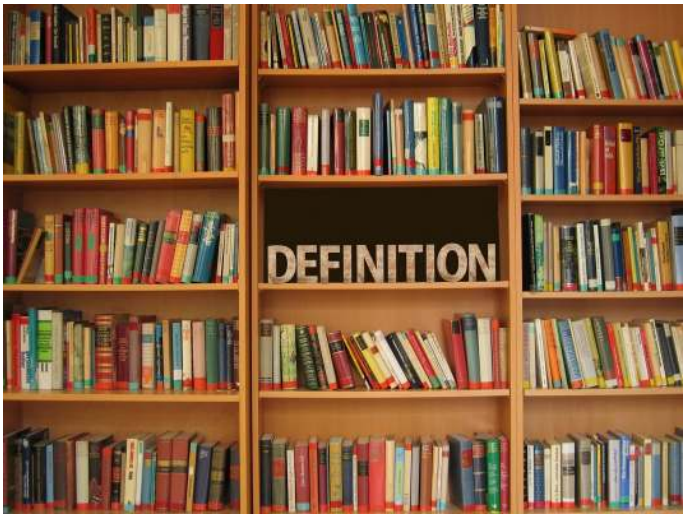


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Definition arguments may attempt to explain what is meant by a particular term. Take the following claim:

> *Organic, in terms of food, means plants and animals raised without additives or artificial growing conditions.*

The argument here hinges upon understanding the definition of the word “organic.” In this case, organic is the subject of the argument. The claim goes on to base the argument on definition criteria. The claim states that two definition criteria of “organic” are “raised without additives” and “raised without artificial growing conditions.” "What do they mean by ‘artificial’?" If you find yourself questioning other terms used in the claim, that might mean your argument will need to dedicate a paragraph or more to defining those terms. An extended argument on organic food would need to explain in detail what distinguishes artificial growing conditions from natural ones. Can greenhouse-grown food be organic? In such a situation, it may benefit the argument to offer the dictionary definition of “organic” as a way to confirm that writer and the readers’ assumptions are the same.

There are a number of online dictionaries that student authors can derive a definition from, but should the writer wish to ensure trust (ethos) with the audience, the source of the dictionary definition might matter. The dictionary.com site offers this definition for “organic”:

> *Organic: pertaining to, involving, or grown with fertilizers or pesticides of animal or vegetable origin, as distinguished from manufactured chemicals” (“organic”).*

Readers who respect the history and legacy of the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* might consider its definition more credible. Considered the most definitive and complete dictionary available, the OED offers differentiated definitions of different uses of the word. In the case of “organic,” we’d need to look at sub-definition 8c to find one that works for our purposes:

> *Organic: of food: produced without the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals.*

A definition argument can put a more specific subject into a category based on criteria, as in the following:

> *Though it omits hormones and antibiotics, organic ice cream remains unhealthy because it contains high levels of fat and sugar, while offering little nutritional value.*

Here we have a subject – organic ice cream – and a category – unhealthy. Presumably, unhealthy things often contain similar criteria – high levels of fat and sugar, low nutritional value, and industrial additives. Organic ice cream might not contain industrial additives, but, because it meets the other two criteria, it can still be considered unhealthy. A good way to test your thesis is to try out examples to see if the criteria work to distinguish things that fit the category from things that don't. Are other things we consider unhealthy full of sugar and/or fat, low in nutrition, and made with industrial additives? Yes. Fast food hamburgers are unhealthy because they contain high levels of fat, low nutritional value, and are full of chemical preservatives.

Definition arguments will need to provide evidence for any generalizations they make about a subject. If they use a specific example, how can they show that the example is **typical**? They may also need to justify the choice of **criteria** for the definition. If we argue that the Vietnam War should not be considered a "World War" even though it involved two global superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, we will need to explain why a criterion like the number of deaths should be considered more important than the number or size of the countries involved.

The benefits of definition

Once we understand the value of definition for clarifying terms in an essay, we can start to appreciate the value of definition in shaping an argument, especially one centered around a contentious term. When controversy revolves around an issue, defining terms explicitly and precisely is even more critical. In Section 4.2: Check If the Meaning Is Clear, we saw how mixing different meanings of one term can disguise a problem with the logic of an argument (if this is done intentionally, it is called **equivocation**). A definition argument can help avoid this kind of slippage, and it can clarify where disagreements lie. Even if it doesn't resolve the disagreements, it may at least prevent misunderstandings.

One example lies in the definition of "life" in the abortion debate. Those on the pro-life side argue "life" is defined by the initial meeting of sperm and egg, and the subsequent division of cells. On the other hand, those on the pro-choice side often argue that "life" is determined by autonomy, by the fetus's ability to survive outside the womb, and this, generally, is possible at twenty-four weeks. Prior to that, the fetus is fully dependent for survival upon the security of the woman's womb.

To take another example, let's say the government decides to allow health insurance providers to exclude coverage to individuals with preexisting conditions. The question then arises, what precisely does constitute a preexisting condition? Any diagnosis of cancer, including minor skin cancers? Diabetes? Obesity? Hypertension? Consider how many of our friends and family members have been diagnosed with any of these conditions.

Laws rely on definitions. Many of us are familiar with the purpose of Title IX, which ensured that equal funding should be applied for both male and female athletic programs in schools. However, with the recognition of transgender students and their rights, the U.S. Department of Education offered a statement of clarification to the language of Title IX: “explaining that it will enforce Title IX's prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex to include: (1) discrimination based on sexual orientation; and (2) discrimination based on gender identity” (“Title IX”). Schools, students, and parents can now point to this language in debates about who is protected by Title IX status, and who can be included in the funding of gender-specific sports teams. Legal definitions often depend upon qualifiers, as in the case of the gun debate. Many on the pro-gun rights argument will not extend the definition of guns to include fully automatic guns; thus, they will often only agree with new gun restrictions that exclude AR 47s from such regulations.

Definitions involve emotional associations as well as descriptions of literal meaning. Public opinion can be swayed by casting a person involved in a very public event as "famous" or "infamous," a term that has decidedly negative connotations. In the case of Trayvon Martin, a young black man who was shot by George Zimmerman, a white man, Martin was defined alternately as a "boy in a hoodie" or as a "potential thug." And Zimmerman was defined as "a neighborhood watch leader" or "private citizen" by some, and a "vigilante" by others. In each case, the label implies a definition of the person and his behavior, and this extends the impression built in the mind of the audience.

Strategies for definition

Referring to existing definitions

A dictionary definition can be helpful if the term under consideration is new or very unusual or uncommon, words which readers may be unfamiliar with, or whose definitions may have become obscured with modern use. If an argument takes the position that reduced literacy rates in freshman college students makes them less apt to learn from a professor who leans toward sesquipedalian speech, yet, such speech is exactly the challenge these students need to pull them away from their social media feeds and engage them in the vigorous mental workout that academia provides, the author is more likely to earn the trust of the audience if a dictionary definition is provided for this uncommon and archaic word: words that are a foot and a half long (O.E.D.).

Identifying emotional associations (connotations)

Emotional associations offer the various levels of meaning a word may have. For example, love can have several variants, such as platonic love, romantic love, familial love, passionate love, self-love, and even more specific ones, such as spirituality, philanthropy, humanity, nationalism/patriotism, and *agapé*, and each carries its own emotional tone which informs the definition. The essay "What is Poverty" offers multiple connotations of poverty through the numerous illustrations.

Defining a term based on what it's not (negation)

Sometimes complex words are best explained by what they are *not*, specifically by contrasting the word to another term. Needs are often confused with wants, but needs are anything necessary for survival. For example, people often say "I need a vacation," when what they really mean is, "I want a vacation." You may *want* coffee, but you *need* water. You may *want* a new car, but a used one may suit your *needs*. In an article about sexual predators, Andrew Vachss says that when he tells people about the individuals he prosecutes for abuse against children, people often say, "that's sick." But he clarifies that there is a difference between "sick" and "evil." A mother who hears voices in her head telling her to lock her baby in a closet is sick. A man who sells a child to pornographers is evil. "Sickness," he says, "is the absence of choice," while evil is the volition, the awareness of choice, and the intentional choice to commit a sinister act (Vachss).

Creating an original definition (stipulation)

This use of definition asks the reader to accept an alternate definition from the standard or commonly accepted one. This is usually the best way to utilize definition in an essay, as it allows the author the freedom to put his or her own spin on a key term. But the author must do it responsibly, providing supportive examples. For example, many young people believe that true parental love is the willingness to do *anything at all* for a child. However, real love isn't expressed by doormat behavior. A parent who does his child's homework so the child receives all "A" grades isn't demonstrating love {*note the use of negation here*}. Rather, true parental love is the willingness to apply fair rules and limits on behavior in order to raise a child who is a good worker, a good friend, and a good citizen.

Elaborating on a definition (extended definition)

There is no rule about how long a definition argument should be. When a simple one-line definition will not suffice, writers can develop a multi-paragraph, multi-page or multi-chapter definition argument. For example, a newspaper article might explore at length what is meant by the phrase "cancel culture." An entire book each might be needed to explain what is meant by the following terms: "critical race theory," "microagression," "gender identity," "fascism," or "intersectionality." When the concept under examination is complex, contentious, or weighted by historical examples and emotional connotations, an extended definition may be needed.

Sample definition arguments

This sample outline for an essay titled "When Colleges Talk about Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism, What Do They Mean?" shows the structure of one definition argument.

The student essay "Defining Stereotypes" by Imanol Juarez can serve as another example. Annotations on this essay point out how Juarez uses several definition argument strategies.

- Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample definition essay "Defining Stereotypes" accessible version with notes in parentheses.

Practice Exercise 6.8.1

How are attitudes to gender changing in today's society? Come up with a definition argument you think has some validity about a current trend related to gender. What kind of evidence could be gathered to support this claim? How would you convince readers that this evidence is typical? You could choose one of the claims below or invent your own.

- People today still associate femininity with weakness and masculinity with strength.
- Women are still more nurturing than men.
- Teenagers today see gender as a spectrum.
- Cisgender people still fear transgender people.

Practice Exercise 6.8.2

Construct a definition with criteria for one of the following terms, or another term of your choice related to gender. Feel free to research the terms to get ideas. Possible terms: masculine, feminine, androgynous, macho, femme, butch, manly, womanly, machista, metrosexual, genderqueer, third gender, transgender.

Practice Exercise 6.8.3

Choose one of the following articles. Which of the definition strategies listed in this section can you identify in the argument? Can you think of any other strategies the author might have used?

- "The True Meaning of the Word 'Cisgender'" by Dawn Ennis in *The Advocate*
- "The Definition of Terrorism" by Brian Whitaker in *The Guardian*

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6.9: Evaluation Arguments

Media Alternative

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What is an evaluation argument?

In college, professional life, politics, and everyday life, we constantly must assess how things measure up. We are faced with questions like the following:

- Does our employer treat us fairly?
- Does our local cafe deserve five stars or four?
- Is the “Free City” program that makes City College of San Francisco tuition free for residents a success?
- Is a particular hillside a good location for a wind farm?
- Does the president deserve their current approval rating?

To answer each of these questions and convince others that our answer is valid, we would need to make an evaluation argument. Most commonly, evaluation arguments rate their subject on a scale from positive to negative. Evaluation arguments make a claim about the quality of something. We can think of them as answering the question "How good or bad is it?"



A convincing evaluation depends on careful thought about the criteria.
Photo by Liza Summer from Pexels under the Pexels License.

Criteria

Evaluation arguments usually need to define and justify the **criteria** they use to make the evaluation. These criteria may consist of moral standards, aesthetic standards, or tests of successful functioning. Depending on how controversial the criteria are, the argument may need to defend and explain why they have been chosen. How can we support our choice of criteria? We may cite precedent or the authoritative sources in the field, or we may discuss the merit of the criteria in themselves by arguing for the good results they lead to and aligning them with values we believe our audience will share.

Judgment

Once we have convinced readers that the criteria for quality are valid, we will need to articulate our **judgment** about the extent to which the subject meets or doesn't meet those criteria.

Evidence

Finally, the argument will need to provide **evidence** of the way in which the subject meets or does not meet the criteria. See 4.4: Decide How Strong the Evidence Is and 12.5: Developing Paragraphs. for ideas on the types of evidence to choose from.

Ranking criteria

In cases where there are multiple valid criteria, the writer may need to **rank** them in order of importance and justify this ranking. For example, an editorial supporting Alyesha Jenkins for mayor would need to explain what the city should be looking for in a mayor at the moment. The editorial might argue that the top priority should be finding someone who has a workable plan to address the homelessness crisis. It might then go on to identify as secondary priority finding someone who has been an effective leader of a large organization. Finally, it might argue that finding a candidate who will focus on ending police brutality in the city should be the third priority. Given these criteria, the argument might praise describe Alyesha Jenkins' concrete, popular plan on homelessness and background as a successful city supervisor and head of a law firm. It might note that her record on police brutality is limited, but we still judge her to be a strong candidate.

Types of criteria

We can classify evaluative arguments by the kind of criteria they use. They may focus on aesthetics, that is the appearance or appeal of something (a movie, a work of art, or a building), or practical concerns about how something functions, or moral judgements based on values.

Aesthetic Criteria

What makes a great film can be an academic question or an everyday debate among friends going to the movies. Film critics and Film Studies classes try to identify clear **aesthetic criteria** for award-worthy movies. Film blogger Tyler Schirado, who writes for the San Diego Film festival, details criteria including acting quality, dialogue, pacing, plot coherence, cinematography, production design, and special effects. Each of those criteria could in turn include sub-criteria. For example, the criteria for the quality of the special effects might include both how innovative and how spectacular they are.

Operational Criteria

Sometimes the criteria that matter are very practical. We use **operational criteria** when we are looking for certain concrete results. What does the subject we are evaluating do? If we want to evaluate a new car's safety features, we will ended to see how it performs under challenging conditions. When the FDA evaluates and tests a new vaccine, they follow an set of procedures to test how the vaccine affects first cells, then animal bodies, and finally human bodies. The FDA considers the results of all these procedures to help it decide whether to approve the vaccine or not. And if the consumer has confidence in the FDA's standards for data collection, they can use the criteria about the vaccine's past record of immune protection and side effects to help them decide whether or not to get vaccinated.

Moral Criteria

An evaluation argument based on **moral criteria** will claim that something is right or wrong. It will need to appeal to shared values or make a case for a particular value that serves as criteria. Some values are nearly universal, such as honesty, reasonableness, and fairness, as we will discuss in 9.6: Moral Character. However, even values that seem universal may be defined differently by different groups. We each grow up in an environment that instills a particular set of family or cultural or religious values. These help to shape our own sense of morality, or personal values and codes that we chose to live by.

Many values may be unconsciously held, but a moral argument will need to articulate them explicitly in order to make its case. Remembering our discussion of assumptions in 4.5: Check the Argument's Assumptions, we recall that each argument is based upon spoken or unspoken beliefs (warrants), such as "free speech is worthy of protection," or "democracy is desirable," or "cheating is wrong." As we saw in 7.2: Tailoring an Argument to an Audience, it can be helpful to recognize our particular audience's values and see where they align with our own. Convincing readers that we share values can enhance the sense of trust between reader and writer, as we will see in Chapter 9: How Arguments Appeal to Trust and Connection (Ethos).

As an example, the Motion Pictures Academy includes some moral criteria as well as aesthetic criteria when it selects winners for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actors. Responding to the #OscarsSoWhite campaign, the Academy of Motion Pictures decided to incorporate the value of inclusiveness into their criteria. In order to emphasize "the inclusion of people in underrepresented groups, including women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people and those with cognitive or physical disabilities," they developed a new set of criteria for nominations for Best Picture. The criteria state that starting in 2024, "To be eligible for best picture, a film must meet at least two standards across four categories: 'Onscreen Representation, Themes and Narratives,' 'Creative Leadership and Project Team,' 'Industry Access and Opportunities' and 'Audience Development,' (Rottenberg). Each of

these new criteria responds to the demands for inclusivity and equity, and is evidence that criteria can and should evolve as social morals evolve.

Comparative Evaluation

Many times we will need to evaluate the worth of one subject in relation to another in order to judge which is better. Of course, we will need to decide on the basis for comparison, or the criteria to be used, and make that basis clear. Then we will need to evaluate each subject according to the criteria. In comparisons, ranking the criteria will often be important because one subject may do better on one criterion and worse on another. We'll need to know which criterion is more important in order to decide which comes out ahead overall.

The point-by-point organizational technique described in 3.9: Comparing and Contrasting Arguments can be helpful in structuring such an essay because it allows us to write about one criterion at a time and see how both subjects compare on that one point before moving on to the next criterion. For example, we might compare the job of being a nanny with the job of being a preschool teacher. In one section, we would compare earnings for each job, and in another section, we would discuss potential for professional growth. If nannies come out ahead on earnings and teachers come out ahead on professional growth opportunities, then we will need to rank these criteria in order of importance to decide which job to recommend.

Sample evaluation arguments

To get a sense of what research-based evaluation arguments look like in college classes, see this sample evaluation argument essay prompt and the sample outline to match it. For a full sample evaluation essay, see "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States." Annotations on that essay point out how the author uses evaluation argument strategies. We offer it in two formats:

- Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample evaluation essay "Universal Health Care Coverage for the United States" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise 6.9.1

Reflect on the following questions to construct your own evaluation argument.

- What makes a person a good role model? Choose your top three criteria.
- How would you rank those criteria in order of importance?
- Choose two prominent public figures from history, pop culture or politics, dead or alive, who would be interesting to compare as role models.
- Evaluate each person according to the three criteria you identified.
- Which figure comes out as the better role model?
- If you ranked the criteria differently, would the other one come out ahead?
- What is most controversial in your evaluation? Is it the choice of criteria, the ranking of the criteria, or the idea that your figure fits certain criteria?

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6.10: Causal Arguments

Media Alternative

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Causal arguments attempt to make a case that one thing led to another. They answer the question "What caused it?" Causes are often complex and multiple. Before we choose a strategy for a causal argument it can help to identify our purpose. Why do we need to know the cause? How will it help us?

Purposes of causal arguments

To get a complete picture of how and why something happened

In this case, we will want to look for multiple causes, each of which may play a different role. Some might be background conditions, others might spark the event, and others may be influences that sped up the event once it got started. In this case, we often speak of **near causes** that are close in time or space to the event itself, and **remote causes**, that are further away or further in the past. We can also describe a **chain of causes**, with one thing leading to the next, which leads to the next. It may even be the case that we have a **feedback loop** where a first event causes a second event and the second event triggers more of the first, creating an endless circle of causation. For example, as sea ice melts in the arctic, the dark water absorbs more heat, which warms it further, which melts more ice, which makes the water absorb more heat, etc. If the results are bad, this is called a vicious circle.

To decide who is responsible

Sometimes if an event has multiple causes, we may be most concerned with deciding who bears responsibility and how much. In a car accident, the driver might bear responsibility and the car manufacturer might bear some as well. We will have to argue that the responsible party caused the event but we will also have to show that there was a moral obligation not to do what the party did. That implies some degree of choice and knowledge of possible consequences. If the driver was following all good driving regulations and triggered an explosion by activating the turn signal, clearly the driver cannot be held responsible.

In order to determine that someone is responsible, there must be a clearly defined **domain of responsibility** for that person or entity. To convince readers that a certain party is responsible, readers have to agree on what the expectations for that party in their particular role are. For example, if a patient misreads the directions for taking a drug and accidentally overdoses, does the drug manufacturer bear any responsibility? What about the pharmacist? To decide that, we need to agree on how much responsibility the manufacturer has for making the directions foolproof and how much the pharmacist has for making sure the patient understands them. Sometimes a person can be held responsible for something they didn't do if the action omitted fell under their domain of responsibility.

To figure out how to make something happen

In this case we need to zero in on a factor or factors that will push the event forward. Such a factor is sometimes called a **precipitating cause.** The success of this push will depend on circumstances being right for it, so we will likely also need to describe the **conditions** that have to be in place for the precipitating cause to actually precipitate the event. If there are likely factors that could block the event, we need to show that those can be eliminated. For example, if we propose a particular surgery to fix a heart problem, we will also need to show that the patient can get to a hospital that performs the surgery and get an appointment. We will certainly need to show that the patient is likely to tolerate the surgery.

To stop something from happening

In this case, we do not need to describe all possible causes. We want to find a factor that is so necessary to the bad result that if we get rid of that factor, the result cannot occur. Then if we eliminate that factor, we can block the bad result. If we cannot find a single such factor, we may at least be able to find one that will make the bad result less likely. For example, to reduce wildfire risk in California, we cannot get rid of all fire whatsoever, but we can repair power lines and aging gas and electric infrastructure to reduce

the risk that defects in this system will spark a fire. Or we could try to reduce the damage fires cause by focusing on clearing underbrush.

To predict what might happen in future

As Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor put it in *A Rhetoric of Argument*, "When you argue for a prediction, you try to convince your reader that all the causes needed to bring about an event are in place or will fall into place." You also may need to show that nothing will intervene to block the event from happening. One common way to support a prediction is by comparing it to a past event that has already played out. For example, we might argue that humans have survived natural disasters in the past, so we will survive the effects of climate change as well. As Fahnestock and Secor point out, however, "the argument is only as good as the analogy, which sometimes must itself be supported." How comparable are the disasters of the past to the likely effects of climate change? The argument would need to describe both past and possible future events and convince us that they are similar in severity.

Techniques and cautions for causal argument

So how does a writer make a case that one thing causes another? The briefest answer is that the writer needs to convince us that the factor and the event are correlated and also that there is some way in which the factor could plausibly lead to the event. Then the writer will need to convince us that they have done due diligence in considering and eliminating alternate possibilities for the cause and alternate explanations for any correlation between the factor and the event.

Identify possible causes

If other writers have already identified possible causes, an argument simply needs to refer back to those and add in any that have been missed. If not, the writer can put themselves in the role of detective and imagine what might have caused the event.

Determine which factor is most correlated with the event

If we think that a factor may commonly cause an event, the first question to ask is whether they go together. If we are looking for a sole cause, we can ask if the factor is always there when the event happens and always absent when the event doesn't happen. Do the factor and the event follow the same trends? The following methods of arguing for causality were developed by philosopher John Stuart Mill, and are often referred to as "Mill's methods."

- If the event is repeated and every time it happens, a **common factor** is present, that common factor may be the cause.
- If there is a **single difference** between cases where the event takes place and cases where it doesn't.
- If an event and a possible cause are repeated over and over and they happen to varying degrees, we can check whether they always increase and decrease together. This is often best done with a graph so we can visually check whether the lines follow the same pattern.
- Finally, ruling out other possible causes can support a case that the one remaining possible cause did in fact operate.

Explain how that factor could have caused the event

In order to believe that one thing caused another, we usually need to have some idea of how the first thing could cause the second. If we cannot imagine how one would cause another, why should we find it plausible? Any argument about **agency**, or the way in which one thing caused another, depends on assumptions about what makes things happen. If we are talking about human behavior, then we are looking for motivation: love, hate, envy, greed, desire for power, etc. If we are talking about a physical event, then we need to look at physical forces. Scientists have dedicated much research to establishing how carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could effectively trap heat and warm the planet.

If there is enough other evidence to show that one thing caused another but the way it happened is still unknown, the argument can note that and perhaps point toward further studies that would establish the mechanism. The writer may want to qualify their argument with "may" or "might" or "seems to indicate," if they cannot explain how the supposed cause led to the effect.

Eliminate alternate explanations

The catchphrase "**correlation is not causation**" can help us to remember the dangers of the methods above. It's usually easy to show that two things happen at the same time or in the same pattern, but hard to show that one actually causes another. Correlation can be a good reason to investigate whether something is the cause, and it can provide some evidence of causality, but it is not proof. Sometimes two unrelated things may be correlated, like the number of women in Congress and the price of milk. We can imagine that both might follow an upward trend, one because of the increasing equality of women in society and the other because of inflation. Describing a plausible agency, or way in which one thing led to another, can help show that the correlation is not

random. If we find a strong correlation, we can imagine various causal arguments that would explain it and argue that the one we support has the most plausible agency.

Sometimes things vary together because there is a common cause that affects both of them. An argument can explore possible third factors that may have led to both events. For example, students who go to elite colleges tend to make more money than students who go to less elite colleges. Did the elite colleges make the difference? Or are both the college choice and the later earnings due to a third cause, such as family connections? In his book *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual*, journalist Michael Pollan assesses studies on the effects of supplements like multivitamins and concludes that people who take supplements are also those who have better diet and exercise habits, and that the supplements themselves have no effect on health. He advises, “Be the kind of person who takes supplements -- then skip the supplements.”

If we have two phenomena that are correlated and happen at the same time, it's worth considering whether the second phenomenon could actually have caused the first rather than the other way around. For example, if we find that gun violence and violence within video games are both on the rise, we shouldn't leap to blame video games for the increase in shootings. It may be that people who play video games are being influenced by violence in the games and becoming more likely to go out and shoot people in real life. But could it also be that as gun violence increases in society for other reasons, such violence is a bigger part of people's consciousness, leading video game makers and gamers to incorporate more violence in their games? It might be that causality operates in both directions, creating a feedback loop as we discussed above.

Proving causality is tricky, and often even rigorous academic studies can do little more than suggest that causality is probable or possible. There are a host of laboratory and statistical methods for testing causality. The gold standard for an experiment to determine a cause is a double-blind, randomized control trial in which there are two groups of people randomly assigned. One group gets the drug being studied and one group gets the placebo, but neither the participants nor the researchers know which is which. This kind of study eliminates the effect of unconscious suggestion, but it is often not possible for ethical and logistical reasons.

The ins and outs of causal arguments are worth studying in a statistics course or a philosophy course, but even without such a course we can do a better job of assessing causes if we develop the habit of looking for alternate explanations.

Sample annotated causal argument

The article "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" by Jason West, published in *The Conversation*, can serve as an example. Annotations point out how the author uses several causal argument strategies.

- Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" in PDF version with margin notes
- Sample causal essay "Climate Explained: Why Carbon Dioxide Has Such Outsized Influence on Earth’s Climate" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise **6.10.1**

Reflect on the following to construct a causal argument. What would be the best intervention to introduce in society to reduce the rate of violent crime? Below are some possible causes of violent crime. Choose one and describe how it could lead to violent crime. Then think of a way to intervene in that process to stop it. What method from among those described in this section would you use to convince someone that your intervention would work to lower rates of violent crime? Make up an argument using your chosen method and the kind of evidence, either anecdotal or statistical, you would find convincing.

Possible causes of violent crime:

- Homophobia and transphobia
- PTSD
- Testosterone
- Child abuse
- Violence in the media
- Role models who exhibit toxic masculinity
- Depression
- Violent video games
- Systemic racism

- Lack of education on expressing emotions
- Unemployment
- Not enough law enforcement
- Economic inequality
- The availability of guns

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6.11: Proposal Arguments

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 55 sec):

0:00 / 3:55

Proposal arguments attempt to push for action of some kind. They answer the question "What should be done about it?"

In order to build up to a proposal, an argument needs to incorporate elements of definition argument, evaluation argument, and causal argument. First, we will need to define a problem or a situation that calls for action. Then we need to make an evaluation argument to convince readers that the problem is bad enough to be worth addressing. This will create a sense of urgency within the argument and inspire the audience to seek and adopt proposed action. In most cases, it will need to make causal arguments about the roots of the problem and the good effects of the proposed solution.

Below are some elements of proposal arguments. Together, these elements can help us create a sense of urgency about the need for action and confidence in your proposal as a solution.

Common elements of proposal arguments

Background on the problem, opportunity, or situation

Often just after the introduction, the background section discusses what has brought about the need for the proposal—what problem, what opportunity exists for improving things, what the basic situation is. For example, management of a chain of daycare centers may need to ensure that all employees know CPR because of new state mandates requiring it, or an owner of pine timberland in eastern Oregon may want to make sure the land can produce saleable timber without destroying the environment.

While the named audience of the proposal may know the problem very well, writing the background section is useful in demonstrating our particular view of the problem. If we cannot assume readers know the problem, we will need to spend more time convincing them that the problem or opportunity exists and that it should be addressed. For a larger audience not familiar with the problem, this section can give detailed context.

Description of the proposed solution

Here we define the nature of what we are proposing so readers can see what is involved in the proposed action. For example, if we write an essay proposing to donate food scraps from restaurants to pig farms, we will need to define what will be considered food scraps. In another example, if we argue that organic produce is inherently healthier for consumers than non-organic produce, and we propose governmental subsidies to reduce the cost of organic produce, we will need to define “organic” and describe how much the government subsidies will be and which products or consumers will be eligible. See 7.2: Definition Arguments for strategies that can help us elaborate on our proposed solution so readers can envision it clearly.

Methods

If we have not already covered the proposal's methods in the description, we may want to add this. How will we go about completing the proposed work? For example, in the above example about food scraps, we would want to describe and how the leftover food will be stored and delivered to the pig farms. Describing the methods shows the audience we have a sound, thoughtful approach to the project. It serves to demonstrate that we have the knowledge of the field to complete the project.

Feasibility of the project

A proposal argument needs to convince readers that the project can actually be accomplished. How can enough time, money, and will be found to make it happen? Have similar proposals been carried out successully in the past? For example, we might observe that according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Rutgers University runs a program that sends a ton of food scraps a day from its dining halls to a local farm.[1] If we describe how other efforts overcame obstacles, we will persuade readers that if they can succeed, this proposal can as well.

Benefits of the proposal

Most proposals discuss the advantages or benefits that will come from the solution proposed. Describing the benefits helps you win the audience to your side, so readers become more invested in adopting your proposed solution. In the food scraps example, we might emphasize that the Rutgers program, rather than costing more, led to $100,000 a year in savings because the dining halls no longer needed to pay to have the food scraps hauled away. We could calculate the predicted savings for our new proposed program as well.

In order to predict the positive effects of the proposal and show how implementing it will lead to good results, we will want to use causal arguments. The strategies in 7.5: Causal Arguments will be helpful here. This is a good time to refer back to the problem we identified early in the essay and show how the proposal will resolve that original problem.

Sample annotated proposal argument

The sample essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" by student Laurent Wenjun Jiang can serve as an example. Annotations point out how Jiang uses several proposal argument strategies.

- Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" in PDF with margin notes
- Sample proposal essay "Why We Should Open Our Borders" accessible version with notes in parentheses

Practice Exercise **6.11.1**

Find a proposal argument that you strongly support. Browse news and opinion websites, or try The Conversation. Once you have chosen a proposal, read it closely and look for the elements discussed in this section. Do you find enough discussion of the background, methods, feasibility, and benefits of the proposal? Discuss at least one way in which you think the proposal could be revised to be even more convincing.

Works Cited

[1] "Fact Sheet About the Food Scraps Diversion Program at Rutgers University." *Environmental Protection Agency, U.S.* October 2009, https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-mana...ers-university. Accessed 12/10/2021.

Attributions

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Write Paragraphs That Support Your Thesis Argument

7.1: Creating Coherence
7.2: Strategies for Developing Supportive Paragraphs
7.3: Types of Support
7.4: Working with Sources- Part I
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7.6: Tips for Paraphrasing and Quoting
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7.1: Creating Coherence



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Cohesion and Coherence

With a key sentence established, the next task is to shape the body of your paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent. As Williams and Bizup[8] explain, cohesion is about the "sense of flow" (how each sentence fits with the next), while coherence is about the "sense of the whole".[9] Some students worry too much about "flow" and spend a lot of time on sentence-level issues to promote it. We encourage you to focus on underlying structure. For the most part, a text reads smoothly when it conveys a thoughtful and well organized argument or analysis. Focus first and most on your ideas, on crafting an ambitious analysis. The most useful guides advise you to first focus on getting your ideas on paper and then revising for organization and wordsmithing later, refining the analysis as you go. Therefore, we will discuss creating cohesion and coherent paragraphs here as if you already have some rough text written and are in the process of smoothing out your prose to clarify your argument for both your reader and yourself. Deal with cohesion and coherence during the editing--not the drafting--process.

Cohesion refers to the flow from sentence to sentence. For example, compare these passages about how cliques form:

Version A (Which We Rewrote):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. If an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other, according to balance theory (1363).[10] Bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties, Granovetter argues (1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. If two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. Only weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends" can connect people in different cliques.

Version B (The Original By Giuffre):

> Granovetter begins by looking at balance theory. In brief, balance theory tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be tied to each other (1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge ties between cliques are always weak ties (1364). Weak ties may not necessarily be bridges, but Granovetter argues that bridges will be weak. This is because if two actors share a strong tie, they will draw in their other strong relations and will eventually form a clique. The only way, therefore, that people in different cliques can be connected is through weak ties that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends." [11]

Version A has the exact same information as version B, but it is harder to read because it is less cohesive. In version B, however, each sentence begins with old information and bridges to new information. Here's Version B again with the relevant parts emboldened:

> Granovetter begins by looking at **balance theory.** In brief, **balance theory** tells us that if an actor, A, is strongly tied to both B and C, it is extremely likely that B and C are, sooner or later, going to be **tied** to each other (1363). Granovetter argues that because of this, bridge **ties** between cliques are always **weak ties** (1364). **Weak ties** may not necessarily be **bridges**, but Granovetter argues that **bridges** will be weak. **This is because** if two actors share a **strong tie**, they will draw in their other **strong relations** and will eventually form a **clique**. The only way, therefore, that people in **different cliques** can be connected is through **weak ties** that do not have the strength to draw together all the "friends of friends."

The first sentence establishes the key idea of balance theory. The next sentence begins with balance theory and ends with social ties, which is the focus of the third sentence. The concept of weak ties connects the third and fourth sentences and concept of

cliques the fifth and sixth sentences. In Version A, in contrast, the first sentence focuses on balance theory, but then the second sentence makes a new point about social ties *before* telling the reader that the point comes from balance theory. The reader has to take in a lot of unfamiliar information before learning how it fits in with familiar concepts. Version A is coherent, but the lack of cohesion makes it tedious to read.

The lesson is this: if you or others perceive a passage you've written to be awkward or choppy, even though the topic is consistent, try rewriting it to ensure that each sentence begins with a familiar term or concept. If your points don't naturally daisy-chain together like the examples given here, consider numbering them. For example, you may choose to write, "Proponents of the legislation point to four major benefits." Then you could discuss four loosely related ideas without leaving your reader wondering how they relate.

While cohesion is about the sense of flow; coherence is about the sense of the whole. For example, here's a passage that is cohesive (from sentence to sentence) but lacks coherence:

> Your social networks and your location within them shape the kinds and amount of information that you have access to. Information is distinct from data, in that information makes some kind of generalization about a person, thing, or population. Defensible generalizations about society can be either probabilities (i.e., statistics) or patterns (often from qualitative analysis). Such probabilities and patterns can be temporal, spatial, or simultaneous.

Each sentence in the above passage starts with a familiar idea and progresses to a new one, but it lacks coherence—a sense of being about one thing. Good writers often write passages like that when they're free-writing or using the drafting stage to cast a wide net for ideas. A writer weighing the power and limits of social network analysis may free-write something like that example and, from there, develop a more specific plan for summarizing key insights about social networks and then discussing them with reference to the core tenets of social science. As a draft, an incoherent paragraph often points to a productive line of reasoning; one just has to continue thinking it through in order to identify a clear argumentative purpose for each paragraph. With its purpose defined, each paragraph, then, becomes a lot easier to write. Coherent paragraphs aren't just about style; they are a sign of a thoughtful, well developed analysis.

The Wind-Up

Some guides advise you to end each paragraph with a specific concluding sentence, in a sense, to treat each paragraph as a kind of mini-essay. But that's not a widely held convention. Most well written academic pieces don't adhere to that structure. The last sentence of the paragraph should certainly be in your own words (as in, not a quote), but as long as the paragraph succeeds in carrying out the task that it has been assigned by its key sentence, you don't need to worry about whether that last sentence has an air of conclusiveness. For example, consider these paragraphs about the cold fusion controversy of the 1980s that appeared in a best-selling textbook[12]:

> The experiment seemed straightforward and there were plenty of scientists willing to try it. Many did. It was wonderful to have a simple laboratory experiment on fusion to try after the decades of embarrassing attempts to control hot fusion. This effort required multi-billion dollar machines whose every success seemed to be capped with an unanticipated failure. 'Cold fusion' seemed to provide, as Martin Fleischmann said during the course of that famous Utah press conference, 'another route'—the route of little science.

In that example, the first and last sentences in the paragraph are somewhat symmetrical: the authors introduce the idea of accessible science, contrast it with big science, and bring it back to the phrase "little science." Here's an example from the same chapter of the same book that does not have any particular symmetry[13]:

> The struggle between proponents and critics in a scientific controversy is always a struggle for credibility. When scientists make claims which are literally 'incredible', as in the cold fusion case, they face an uphill struggle. The problem Pons and Fleischmann had to overcome was that they had credibility as electrochemists but not as nuclear physicists. And it was nuclear physics where their work was likely to have its main impact.

The last sentence of the paragraph doesn't mirror the first, but the paragraph still works just fine. In fact, it serves as a transition into what is likely the focus of the next paragraph. In general, every sentence of academic writing should add some unique content. Don't trouble yourself with having the last sentence in every paragraph serve as a mini-conclusion. Instead, worry about developing each point sufficiently and making your logical sequence clear.



Video 7.1.1

Cohesion & Coherence: College Writing 3.9. **Authored by:** English for Busy Students. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Creating Coherence with Transitions

To ensure continuity within a paragraph a writer must use key terms and also make use of other techniques such as transitions. Transitions ensure that the reader understands what each sentence says and indicate how the sentences and paragraphs are logically related to each other and the "story." Transitions should be placed at the beginning of a sentence for strongest continuity, usually set off by a comma.

If transitions are missing, the logical relationship between sentences can be unclear and may even be nonexistent. Don't assume your reader knows the relationship between the sentence. The importance of adding transitions is shown in the **following example**:

To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children's school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. _____, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.

The logical relationship between the first and second sentence of this example is not immediately obvious to the reader. Possible transitions that one could fill in between these two sentences include the following:

- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children's school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **In addition**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.
- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children's school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **Therefore**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.
- To determine the effects of lack of lunch on children's school performance, we examined grades and income measures. We found they were negatively correlated. **On the other hand**, lack of food makes learning in school more difficult.

When the transition is missing between these two sentences, most readers may guess that the intended relationship is "in addition," when it really is "therefore." But readers should not have to guess. Sometimes readers can come to a very different conclusion than you intend!

Here is another example:

> We determined sensitivity to allergens in children who have pets. We measured children's histamine levels and logged whether they had pets or not.

In the above example, the logical relationship between the first and second sentences is also not clear because a transition is missing. Once the transition is added in, the relationship between the two sentences becomes obvious.

*Revised example*h

> We determined sensitivity to allergens in children who have pets. **To do this,** we measured children's histamine levels and logged whether they had pets or not.

Use transitions to link ideas, but do not overuse them. Certain transitions are outdated or are used in British, but not American, English, such as: hitherto, whilst, and henceforth.

Table 6.5.1 - Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time

after	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then
Transitions That Show Position		
above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
beside	beyond	inside
near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion		
indeed	hence	in conclusion
in the final analysis	therefore	thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought		
consequently	furthermore	additionally
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering…, it is clear that	
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought		
but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance		
above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
finally	last	in conclusion
most of all	least of all	last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs		
admittedly	at this point	certainly
granted	it is true	generally speaking
in general	in this situation	no doubt
no one denies	obviously	of course
to be sure	undoubtedly	unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples		
for instance	for example	
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps		

first, second, third	generally, furthermore, finally	in the first place, also, last
in the first place, furthermore, finally	in the first place, likewise, lastly	

Transitions to Use with Supporting & Concluding Sentences

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

> There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependence on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that they have another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, and *furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, or *for this reason*.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Table 6.5.2 - Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

For Supporting Sentences					
above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	
For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up
all in all	finally	in conclusion	on balance	thus	

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7.2: Strategies for Developing Supportive Paragraphs



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Developing Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. You need to add elaboration and explanation to flesh out the points listed in your outline. Your support (quotes, paraphrases, etc.) will need to answer questions such as "How does my quote support my topic sentence?" Elaboration makes up a large amount of your paragraph, at least two-thirds and is very important to have in order to have a good essay. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Select Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

> **Tip**
>
> Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about a topic in order to understand its implications before writing about it.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main supporting points for your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you need to choose the best support in your body paragraphs. This can be a judgment call, but if you develop your thesis and outline by working with your sources first, this should be easier. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that the body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Select the Most Effective Primary Support for a Thesis Statement

Remember, in college, you are not limited to just three main subtopics that support your thesis statement. Depending on your assignment, you may examine a topic from many angles and have quite a few topic sentences that related to your thesis. In some

cases, you may need to select which subtopics most support your thesis and remove some others. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

Exercise 1

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs. Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts.** Facts, such as statistics, are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, facts still need explanation. For example, the sentence “The most populated state in the United States is California” is a pure fact, but it will require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument. Always be sure you gather your facts from credible sources.
2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic. Use judgments from experts in the field as they are the more credible sources for the topic.
3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who directly observed an instance of what you are writing about; testimony adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child’s social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

WRITING AT WORK

In any job where you devise a plan, you will need to support the steps that you lay out. This is an area in which you would incorporate primary support into your writing. Choosing only the most specific and relevant information to expand upon the steps will ensure that your plan appears well-thought-out and precise.

TIP

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following credible sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field. Please see section 10.5 " Evaluating and Working with Sources."

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Topic Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the the topic sentence, which is underlined.

J.D. Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, “You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live.” His short story “A Perfect Day for a Bananafish” details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short story, “For Esmé – with

Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger's only novel, The Catcher in the Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

? Exercise 2 7.2.1

Using the three topic sentences you composed for the outline you created in Chapter 5, draft at least three supporting details for each point.

Thesis statement: _____

Primary supporting point 1: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 2: _____

Supporting details: _____

Primary supporting point 3: _____

Supporting details: _____

Tips

- You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at the beginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to be able to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.
- Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.



Video 7.2.1

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Adding Explanation and Elaboration in your Body Paragraphs

In addition to supporting details, college level paragraphs add quite a bit of explanation and elaboration in body paragraphs. Development of explanation and elaboration is one of the big differences between high school and college-level writing. Rather than just appearing in one paragraph all by itself -- possibly in a conclusion -- explanation and elaboration should appear through your essay. Some sentence stems you can use to help you develop your explanation and elaboration appear in the following list.

Sentence Stems for Elaboration

- X matters because _____.
- X is important because _____.
- X is crucial in terms of today's concern over _____ because _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- These points have important consequences for the broader discussion about _____.
- The discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
- These conclusions have significant implications for _____.
- X should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

PIE Paragraph Development for Body Paragraphs

One strategy for developing paragraphs fully can be memorized by the acronym PIE. The acronym makes it easy to remember the elements needed to fully develop a paragraph in an academic essay. PIE stands for:

Point – (also known as the topic sentence). It is the main idea of your paragraph. It:

- Must be a complete sentence
- Should answer the question "why" or "how"
- Must relate to the thesis
- Must relate to the text you are reading and writing about
- You may need to revise it once you have fully developed your paragraph.

Information -- (quotes, paraphrases, data, and occasionally personal experience). It is the evidence with which you are working. Information includes:

- Support for your point
- Ideas from your reading that you want to discuss and explain further
- Information from a text that you are arguing against
- Two to three pieces of "information" per paragraph (generally)

> **Note**
>
> Never end a paragraph with information!

Explanation/elaboration -- The information that connects you inforamtion to your point, explains and discusses your informaiton and ideas, and connects the paragraph to your thesis.

In a standard deductive paragraph, one sentence of "E" connects your first piece of information to your topic sentence.

Aim for four sentences of explanation after each chunk of "I" in your paragraph.

Questions to ask yourself to help develop your E:

- Why is this important?
- What is the effect of this?
- How does this happen?
- How is the author's opinion different from your opinion or another author's opinion?
- Are there any logical fallacies or emotional appeals in the writer's claim? (If you are arguing against what the writer is saying)
- What is the problem or benefit of thinking about something this way?

In reality, you don't just want just a point, a chunk of information, and explanation. Rather you want to intersperse the information and explanation between the the various reasons that support the topic sentence. Thus, the **real structure of a PIE paragraph** looks something like this:

P (topic sentence)

E (explanation connects I to the P)

I (information)

E (explanation of I – minimum 2 – 3 sentences; connection of last piece of I to next piece of I – 1 sentence)

I (information)

E (explanation of E – minimum 2 – 3 sentences; connection of last piece of I to point of whole paragraph)

****Note: You are not limited to this amount of information or elaboration, but if you develop it well, it should probably be enough for one paragraph.**

? Exercise 37.2.1

Identify whether each sentence in the following paragraph is P, I, or E by writing a P, I, or E next to each sentence.

Schools should not prevent students from obtaining lunches even though the administrative records or money is not in place. The effects of doing so are clear in an article that recently appeared on *Vox*. According to the article, during a recent government shutdown "6,300 low-income kids in six states couldn't attend their federally funded Head Start preschools," so the children couldn't receive the meals they would have normally eaten there (Fernandez Campbell). These children may not get anything to eat, their parents may not eat to ensure their kids do, or it comes out of some other essential area of the parents' very limited budget. This out-of-touch arguing only makes low-income families' lives more difficult. Local governments or charitable organizations should ensure these centers stay open even if the federal government doesn't because the effect on children is detrimental mentally and physically. Even if parents can stay home during the outage, children are in no mood to learn from them if they are hungry, and parents are probably not in the mood to teach when they don't know where their children's next meal is coming from. It's even worse when local school districts themselves don't serve children's lunch meals. According to an article in the *Democrat &* Chronicle, school cashiers routinely refuse to serve food to students if their paperwork isn't in proper order (Murphy). Lunch shaming – when school districts would not serve subsidized lunch to students because either the paperwork wasn't processed or the parents hadn't uploaded their part of the payment online – causes many problems for students. Children aren't in control of what the adults in a district or their parents do, and they should not have to pay a price with their learning. Students can't focus in school if they haven't eaten enough. Because they are uncomfortable and hungry, they are more likely to act out and have discipline problems and they are less likely to learn the lessons of the day. This does not seem to be in line with the mission of schools or in the best interest of students. School districts need to find a better way to manage this and other social situations in order to improve the learning environment.

The following video expands on the idea of elaborating your ideas.



Video 7.2.1

Insightful Analysis. **Authored by:** GoReadWriteNow. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube

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7.3: Types of Support

Types of Support



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

The types of support you develop and include in an essay will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you're attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you might rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. If you are writing an essay based on your observations, you might rely on those observations along with examples and reasons. If you are writing a research essay, you might include more quotations, reasons, and facts. Realize, though, that all types of support are usable in all types of essays, and that you often will have many or all of these types of support within one paragraph. The types of support, depending on the purpose of your essay, can include one or more of the following:

- **Reasons**
  - **Example:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Facts**
  - **Example:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.
- **Statistics**
  - **Example:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.(citation would be included here)
- **Quotations**
  - **Example:** "We will not allow this situation to continue," stated Senator Johns (citation would be included here).
- **Examples**
  - **Example:** Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.
- **Personal Observations**
  - **Example:** I have known other workers at my current workplace who have been indirectly dismissed through changes in job duties and other tactics that are directed at making them want to retire, or at least leave their current position.
- **Interviews**
  - **Example:** In an interview accessed online, Bill Gates expressed his optimism that privacy and government access of information will be balanced – that it's not an either/or situation.

Here's an example of one body paragraph that uses many types of support:

> **(Topic sentence)** There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)** First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)** Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)** Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)** Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)** "It's the cheapest car I've ever had," she said. "The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I've owned." **(Concluding sentence)** Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Although it's really useful to understand that there are different types of support, realize that as writers develop support, they don't necessarily think in terms of "I need a fact here" or "I need an observation there." It's often best to simply write your ideas down in the first stage of developing your support. Conscious consideration of different types of support occurs as you continue to work with and review your support, in terms of your writing purpose and audience.

For example, a research essay that offers only statistics and facts may become boring to your audience if not interspersed with your own interpretations and observations and reasons. A personal observation essay may not get your thesis point across to your

audience well if it doesn't include multiple, specific examples. Draft your support first, and then go back to the draft to develop it further, the second time with your purpose, audience, and types of support more consciously in mind.

Remember that a worthy argument is backed by examples. In order to construct a valid argument, good writers conduct lots of background research and take careful notes. They also talk to people knowledgeable about the topic in order to understand it better, before writing about it.

Finding the Right Kind of Support

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources. Most of these can probably be found in your school's library.

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Credibly newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Survey
- Previous experience
- Personal research

To read more about sources and research, see Section 10.4, "Strategies for Gathering Information," and Section 10.5, "Evaluating and Working with Sources."

> **Tip**
>
> When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not generally reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies and bias.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards: It should,

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. Examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, convey the necessary information, and are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may want to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. Develop the discussion and detail in the body paragraphs. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

> **Tip**
>
> You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals (periodicals that address topics in a specialized field).

This brief video reinforces the idea of how support develops and is presented in an essay.



Video 7.3.1

Supporting Details. Authored by: Mastering the Fundamentals of College Reading and Writing. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

Exercise 1 7.3.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: A friend

Purpose: Convince them to wear a mask when you go out for a hike together.

Topic Sentence: Masks are key to prevent the spread of COVID 19.

Specific types of support:

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

Exercise 27.3.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: Your manager

Purpose: Convince them to let you take time off during finals.

Topic Sentence: If I can't get extra time off, I may not be able to pass my class.

Specific types of support:

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

Exercise 37.3.1

Below you are provided with an audience, purpose, and a topic sentence you want to support. Write down what types of support you would use in this situation to convince your audience.

Audience: General public in college (as for an essay)

Purpose: Engage younger people in the democratic process.

Topic Sentence: The voting age should be lowered to 16 in local elections.

Specific types of support:

Collaboration: Compare your answers with a classmate.

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7.4: Working with Sources- Part I

They Say/I Say Approach To Sources

Recall from prior chapters that writing academic papers is about joining a conversation. You're contributing your own original thinking to some complex problem, be it interpretive, theoretical, or practical. Citing sources helps situate your ideas within that ongoing conversation. Sometimes you're citing a research finding that provides strong evidence for your point; at other times you're summarizing someone else's ideas in order to explain how your own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation. Graff and Birkenstein[1] encourage you to think about writing with sources is a "They Say/I Say" process. You first report what "they" say ("they" being published authors, prevalent ideas in society at large, or maybe participants in some kind of political or social debate). Then you respond by explaining what you think: Do you agree? Disagree? A little of both?

This "They Say/I Say" approach can help you find balance in your use of sources. On one extreme, some students think that they aren't allowed to make any claims without citing one or more expert authors saying the same thing. When their instructors encourage them to bring more original thinking into their writing, they're confused about how to do it. On the other extreme, some students tend to describe, more or less accurately, what sources say about a topic but then go on to state opinions that seem unrelated to the claims they just summarized. For example, a student writer may draw on expert sources to explain how the prevention and early detection of cancer has saved lives[2] but then argue for more funding for curing advanced cancer without making any explicit link to the points about prevention and screening. On one extreme, the sources are allowed to crowd out original thinking; on the other, they have seemingly no impact on the author's conclusions.

How can you know when you're avoiding both of these extremes? In other words, what kinds of thesis ("I Say") can count as an original claim and still be grounded in the sources ("They Say")? Here are five common strategies:

1. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument*. You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early 20th century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.
2. *Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications*. You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.
3. *Identify underlying areas of agreement*. You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention in order to claim that insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.
4. *Identify underlying areas of disagreement*. You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.
5. *Identify unanswered questions*. Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

There are certainly other ways authors use sources to build theses, but these examples illustrate how original thinking in academic writing involves making connections with and between a strategically chosen set of sources.

Incorporating Sources

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that illustrates several ways that sources can figure into a "They Say/I Say" approach[3]:

> Willingham (2011) draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn. Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012; Putwain and Best, 2011). Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive short-cuts.
>
> Kahneman (2011) describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip are not usually intellectually taxing activities. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.

> These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement" (http://www.edreform.com/issues/teacher-quality/#what-we-believe). The research that Willingham (2011) and Kahneman (2011) describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.
>
> At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible" (www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/26_03/26_03_karp.shtm), it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.[4]

In that example, the ideas of Willingham and Kahneman are summarized approvingly, bolstered with additional research findings, and then applied to a new realm: the current debate surrounding education reform. Voices in that debate were portrayed as accurately as possible, sometimes with representative quotes. Most importantly, all references were tied directly to the author's own interpretative point, which relies on the quoted claims.

Student Quotation:

I think the most important lesson for me to learn about sources was that the best way to use them is to create a new point. What I mean by this is instead of using them only to back up your points, create your own conclusion from what your sources say. As a psychology major, I look at a lot of data from researchers who have created a conclusion from a meta-analysis (a combination of many studies about the same thing). So that's how I like to think of using sources, I will look at many articles about the same subject and then come up with my own opinion. After using your sources, it is very important to cite them correctly. Personally, I want to be a respected and trustworthy scholar. However, if any of my papers were to be found without proper citations, all of my hard work would be for nothing and people would be wary about the rest of my work.

Aly Button

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Similarly, when you cite sources that you agree with, you should choose quotes or paraphrases that serve as building blocks within your own argument. Regardless of the role each source plays in your writing, you certainly don't need to find whole sentences or passages that express your thinking. Rather, focus on what each of those sources is claiming, why, and how exactly their claims relate to your own points.

The remainder of this chapter explains some key principles for incorporating sources, principles which follow from the general point that academic writing is about entering an ongoing conversation.

Principle 1: Listen to your Sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[5] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on

dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[6]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Principle 2: Provide Context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

> Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that …
>
> Research in cognitive science has found that … (Willingham, 2011).
>
> Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "…"

As the second example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Even more baffling to your reader is when quoted material does not fit into the flow of the text. For example, a novice student might write,

Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Principle 3: Use Sources Efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] (A block quote is an indented paragraph of quoted text.) These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most glowing quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. In fact, in science writing especially, quotes are rarely used. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly

focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:[8]
>
> System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.
>
> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[9] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[10] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable." [11] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking." [12] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source in playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Principle 4: Choose Precise Verbs of Attribution

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:[13]

- Claims
- Asserts

- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than “says”, enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you’re citing: a speculative one (“postulates”)? A conclusive one (“determines”)? A controversial one (“counters”)? You can further show how you’re incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author “claims” something, you’re presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author “shows” something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. “Suggests” on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement. Saying more with less makes your writing much more engaging.

Student Quotation

Sources are your best friend. They either help you reaffirm your thesis or offer a differing opinion that you can challenge in your paper. The biggest thing to worry about, when it comes to sources, is citing. However, there are a multitude of resources to help you cite properly. My personal favorite is called Knightcite.com. You just pick the type of resource, fill in the information on it and voila, you have a perfectly cited resource!

Kaethe Leonard

Conclusion

Like so many things in adult life, writing in college is often both more liberating and burdensome than writing in high school and before. On the one hand, students have expressed that their high-school experiences made it seem that their own opinions didn’t matter in academic writing, and that they can’t make any claims that aren’t exactly paralleled by a pedigreed quotation. Writing papers based on their own insights and opinions can seem freeing in contrast. At the same time, a college student attending full time may be expected to have original and well considered ideas about pre-Columbian Latin American history, congressional redistricting, sports in society, post-colonial literatures, and nano-technology, all in about two weeks. Under these conditions, it’s easy to see why some would long for the days when simple, competent reporting did the job. You probably won’t have an authentic intellectual engagement with every college writing assignment, but approaching your written work as an opportunity to dialog with the material can help you find the momentum you need to succeed with this work.

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7.5: Working with Sources- Part II

How to Incorporate Quotations into Sentences

Basic Quotations

The basic way to write a support sentence with a quote is to introduce the quote with a "signal phrase" and follow it with the appropriate citation (see the following example).

Sentences with quotations have three parts:

1. **Signal phrase** (who said it): Joe said / According to Joe

2. **Quotation** (what was said): “Kawabunga!”

3. **Citation** (where it was said): (36).

? Exercise 37.5.1

In the following examples, identify the signal phrase, the quotation, and the citation:

1. Professor Finkelman said, “College is a glorious adventure for those with the bravery to attempt it” (68).
2. The report clearly indicated that we were not meeting our sales quota when it stated, “Revenues for next quarter must be revised downwards” (12).
3. According to the article “Students Who Fold Clothes,” “Part-time work can offer students the best of both worlds” (Chartrand 11).

Citation and Documentation

Citations are done in the same way, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. The author (or the organization if there is no author, or the title of the article if there is no author or organization) should be somewhere either in the signal phrase or the citation. This author, organization, or title should match the entry in the Works Cited page so your reaer can easily find the source if needed.

Purpose of Citation

The purpose of citation is not just to avoid breaking plagiarism "rules." Rather, it's an academic convention that acknowledges the other authors in the conversation into which you are entering. Imagine going into a group of people you don't know and not acknowledging them and just starting to talk. You would probably be asked (maybe rudely) to leave. But if you enter that conversation by acknowledging what others are saying and then adding in your piece, the group is more likely to accept our presence. Citation is kind of like that without some of the same inter-personal issues. In addition, citation provides a service to your reader. They may find something you quoted or paraphrased intriguing and want to know more. You citation tells them where to look it up. It's possible your audience may want to fact-check you. Citations allow that too. They show you are transparent and forthcoming with your sources, which provides you with more credibility.

What to Include in Citations -- Frequently Asked Questions

Do you need to include the author in the citation, and what if there isn't an author?

- If you’ve already introduced the author in the signal phrase, you only need to include the page number in parentheses.

  Example: Ms. Tang says, "This student works best under fairly steady supervision" (77).

- If you have not already included the author’s last name in the signal phrase, put the author’s last name in the parentheses before the page number.

  Example: According to the article “Balancing College and Cash,” “Flexible part-time work can offer students the best of both worlds, but it increases their time-management stress” (Al-Nouri 11).

- If there is no author, and you don’t mention the article name in the signal phrase, include it in parentheses.

  Example: According to prisoners and nonprofit organizations, “Rikers’ Island prison is a hell hole” (*The Prison from Hell* 3A).

Do I always need to put a page number in parentheses?

Most of the time. If your source is a webpage and has no page numbers, you do not need to include a page number. However, .pdfs online or downloaded from a journal that do have page numbers should include the page number from the .pdf. Almost all printed sources have page numbers.

Where do I put the period?

- If no information is needed in parentheses (i.e., a webpage and you mention the author in the signal phrases), include the period inside the close quotation mark.

  Example: According to Muldoon's blog, "erosion has become a serious problem in the North Sea islands."

- If you do include a citation in parentheses, place a period only after the close parentheses.

  Example: She implores, "We must do something about this" (Muldoon).

(At this point, if your reader wants to know more, they will look up the full bibliographic entry, listed under "Muldoon," on the Works Cited page.)

What if my quote includes a question or exclamation mark at the end?

If your quote includes a question or exclamation mark at the end, include that mark inside the close quotation mark. If your quote is going to have a citation at the end, place a period after the close parentheses. If you do not need to place a citation at the end, you do not need to include any period.

Example: Josie said, "I can't believe what you're telling me!"

Quotation Basics: Why and How to Use Them

Reasons to use quotes:

To give credit to the author (and avoid plagiarism!)

To prove or support your points

To keep the author's interesting word choice

To provide the source for your reader.

How to use use quotes:

- Choose them *AFTER* you have decided what your is.
- Choose them *BECAUSE* they support your point.

OR

- Choose them to help you create your point.
- Put them in the middle of the paragraph, not as a topic sentence or to conclude.
- Follow every quote with an explanation of how it supports your point.

Table 6.4.1 explains how to incorporate quotations into your writing.

Table 6.4.1

How to put quotations into your writing:
1. **Introduce** the quote and who said or wrote it.
2. Incorporate the quote **into a complete sentence** to support your point (the quotation does not have to be a complete sentence though; you can incorporate part of a quoted sentence into your own sentence).
3. **Cite** the **author** and the **page number**.
4. **Analyze** the quote (maybe paraphrase first) and its relevance to your point.

Strategy: PICA (Point, Introduce, Cite, Analyze)

***P**oint*

***I**ntroduce*

***C**ite*

***A**nalyze*

The following example demonstrates how to use this strategy in a body paragraph.

Example

Your point: Students should not just assume they need a four-year degree degree to get to where they want to be.

Introduce: Ben Strickland, senior at the University of Oklahoma, believes in taking a break from the education system to develop a plan. He states, "the truth is this: there is much to be gained by spending time other ways than rigorously studying. College is hardly the only source of education in life. And while you take a break and see the world, college will still be here when you get back-- and, who knows, you might just find a purpose"

Cite: (Robinson 185).

Analyze: It is difficult to do well in school if one doesn't see the point. If people enjoy and can afford to use school to explore their options, they should, but some fields don't require a Bachelor's Degree, and some people prefer to find their interests outside of college.

? Exercise 47.5.1

Read a student's body paragraph below.

- *Where the writer makes their own point, put a **P**.*
- *Where the writer introduces the quote, put an **I**.*
- *Where the writer cites the quote, put a **C**.*
- *Where the writer analyzes the quote, put an **A**.*

Example 1:

_____ Early in their lives, both Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez were ashamed of their writing skills.

_____ Malcolm X wrote and rewrote his letters to his religious mentor, Elijah Muhammad. He describes, "At least twenty-five times I must have written that first one-page letter to him, over and over. I was trying to make it both legible and understandable. I practically couldn't read my handwriting myself; it shames even to remember it"

_____ (X 172).

_____ Malcolm X rewrote his letter so many times because his handwriting and his vocabulary embarrassed him (even when he thought about it, years later).

Example 2:

_____ Like Malcolm X, Rodriguez had a similar feeling about writing.

_____ When his teacher first reads his poetry, Luis says, "Yeah, sure-They are no good, _____ right?" (Rodriguez 218).

_____ Rodriguez just assumed his teacher thought his poems were terrible, before she said anything. Even though he had talent, his feelings of shame prevented him from recognizing it. Both writers persisted through their shame and self-doubt to be able to make use of their gifts.

What you just read was a paragraph that used two quotes to support its main point, that Malcolm X and Luis Rodriguez both struggled to develop confidence in their ability to write.

As you can see, the quotes are **sandwiched** between the student writer's own words.

Introducing a Quote: Part I

How to incorporate a quote into a grammatically correct sentence:

Use ONE of the following methods:

First method:

- According to Tanzina Vega, "…."

Second method:

- Tanzina Vega, journalist, writes "…."
- Tanzina Vega argues that "…"

First Method

According to Schwartz, “Most of all, we want work that is meaningful — that makes a difference to other people and thus ennobles us in at least some small way” (1).

Second Method

- Carnavale et al **write,** “Our projections suggest that the economy will create 55 million new job openings over the next decade, and 65 percent, or 37 million, of these new job vacancies will require some postsecondary education and training (1).
- Holloway **adds that** “in 2014, Americans outworked several expected other countries, among them Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland and Austria, all countries that (coincidentally, I’m so sure) rank higher than us on the most recent World Happiness survey” (1).

Exercise 57.5.1

Observe:

What kind of punctuation comes before the quote? _____

What kind comes after? _____

In the second method, what tense is the verb in? _____

Practice both methods to introduce a quote you will use in your essay:

First method:

Second method:

Incorrect Incorporation of Quotations

Mixing the two above methods:

> According Kali Holloway claims that, “…"

Using strange sentence structure

> In the article by Carnevale et al, it states that…

(Who is “it”? Articles can’t “state” things; only writers or speakers can!)

Using the word "quote"

> Robinson quotes, “…”

(Quoting is what you are doing by repeating his words; he is not quoting, but writing.)

Exercise 67.5.1

Correct the three incorrect examples from above

Naming the source as you introduce the quote is also an option the first time you use a source (only). But don't do this to much because it can interrupt the flow of you thought or make the sentence too long to digest.

Examples:

- In “Race, Ethnicity, and the American Labor Market” Roberta Spalter-Roth and Terri Ann Lowenthal **note** that the “Creation of ‘ethnic niches’ in certain occupations or industries also affects both the desirability and availability of jobs” (5).
- Symonds, Schwartz and Ferguson, in their report, *Pathways to Prosperity*, **argue that** “When young adults fail to successfully complete a post-secondary degree or credential, it is increasingly difficult for them to find an alternative pathway to success through the labor market” (4).
- In his memoir, *It Calls You Back*, Luis Rodriguez **recounts**, “My writing became an obsession. I wrote whenever I had the chance in the midst of all the drama, with rotating shifts and even sixteen-hour days at the mill” (95).

Exercise 77.5.1

Observe

What kind of punctuation or formatting is used with article titles? _____

What kind of punctuation or formatting is used with longer texts like books? _____

What kind of punctuation surrounds the name of each text? _____

What is the subject of each sentence above? 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

What verb is each subject "doing"? 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

What conclusions can you draw about correct quoting from your observations of subjects and verbs? _____

_____

NOTE: The writer or speaker is usually the subject of a sentence that contains a quote. The verb is usually a present tense action verb like: *writes, states, argues, claims,* etc.

Exercise 87.5.1

Incorporate one of the quotes for your essay correctly using the PICA method and the tips above:

State the POINT your quote supports:

INTRODUCE the quote, its writer or speaker, and the text it comes from:

Insert the quote and CITE it correctly:

ANALYZE its relevance to your point:

Exercise 97.5.1

Find the errors in the citations below and rewrite them correctly: Remember to ask yourself: Who is writing what?

1. As it quotes in Finding Your Element by Ken Robinson, "attitude can be everything" (Robinson 146).

2. According to Mike Rose states, tasks like the diagnosis that a plumber has to make while feeling around blindly inside a wall "don't typically appear on IQ tests but are manifestations of intelligence" (Rose).

3. In *Finding Your Element* by Ken Robinson it is stated that, "because they have such a narrow view of ability, school systems usually promote a very wide idea of disability" (Robinson 46).

Contributors

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7.6: Tips for Paraphrasing and Quoting

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (15 min, 22 sec):

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We have seen that paragraphs need supporting sentences, but how specifically can we bring in quotations and paraphrases of other sources into our own essay?

Listen to your sources

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually dispute that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper-writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high-schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school.[1] However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop-out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school"[2]. If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

Provide context

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, p.24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he or she is included here, and where this statement fits into his or her larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights in the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Some examples:

- Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that …
- Research in cognitive science has found that … (Willingham, 2011).
- Willingham argues that "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham, 2011, 24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains "…"

As the first example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Quoted material that does not fit into the flow of the text baffles the reader even more. For example, a novice student might write,

> *Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school*

> *dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff, 2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.*

The reader is thinking, who is this sudden, ghostly "we"? Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

> *Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (2007, p. 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.*

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"; that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well-integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "They Say/I Say" in mind.

Use sources efficiently

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others, like myself as a student, get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page.[7] These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle, because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points. It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most incandescent quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as his or her own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> *Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:*
>
> > *System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive*

> > *answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem.*
>
> *While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.*

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> *Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[4] We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.*

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), it is clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> *Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.[5] System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable." [6] System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking." [7] While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.*

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase or summary depends on the role that the source is playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources (like those listed at the end of this chapter) explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

Choose precise signal phrases

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaim" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounce" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of 15 useful alternatives:

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than "says", enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you're citing: a speculative one ("postulates")? A conclusive one ("determines")? A controversial one ("counters")? You can further show how you're incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author "claims" something, you're presenting yourself as fairly neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author "shows" something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. "Suggests" on the other hand is a much weaker endorsement.

[1]Jennifer C. Lee, J.C. and Jeremy Staff, "When Work Matters: The Varying Impact of Work Intensity on High School Drop Out," *Sociology of Education* 80, no. 2 (2007): 158-178.

[2]Ibid., 159.

[3] It took me a long time to stop abusing block quotes. They made me feel like my paper was an unassailable fortress of citation! With the friendly but pointed feedback of my professors, I gradually came to see how they took too much space away from my own argument.

[4]Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, 416-7.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid, 416.

[8]Ibid, 417.

[9]Robert B. Marks, The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 95.

Practice Exercise 7.6.1

Review one of your own essays to examine areas where you have paraphrased or quoted an outside source. Circle any verbs of attribution, and decide if an alternative would help the reader see the author's purpose or approach more precisely.

Practice Exercise 7.6.2

Read the sample paragraph below from a student paper. Working alone or with a classmate, revise the paragraph to remove the clunky and unnecessary block quote. Use the main idea in the topic sentence to make a deliberate, thoughtful decision as to which chunks of quote to use.

> Visiting a doctor is often the first step to diagnosing a serious illness, but some people delay seeing a physician because of rising healthcare costs. In the article "Does forgetting a name or word mean that I have dementia?" by Laurie Archbald-Pannone, it states,
>
> > *First, it is important to know that dementia cannot be diagnosed from afar or by someone who is not a doctor. A person needs a detailed doctor's exam for a diagnosis. Sometimes, brain imaging is required. And, forgetting an occasional word – or even where you put your keys – does not mean a person has dementia. There are different types of memory loss and they can have different causes, such as other medical conditions, falls or even medication, including herbals, supplements and anything over-the-counter.*

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7.7: Key Takeaways

- Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readersAlways be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself. It should be specific, precise, forceful, confident, and able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- Topic sentences express the main idea of a paragraph combined with the writer's attitude or opinion about the topic, using engaging vocabulary.
- Topic sentence placement depends on the interaction between the purpose of the paragraph, the content, and the audience. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Use your topic outline or your sentence outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.
- A strong opening captures your readers' interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- The funnel technique for writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea, and avoid introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.
- Cohesion means how one sentence moves to the next; a sentence should begin with given information and conclude with new information.
- Cohesion can be created with a combination of words related to the topic and transition words.
- Coherence basically means whether a paragraph stays on topic.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Revising and Editing

8.1: Revising and Editing
8.2: Stage 1- The Big Picture
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8.1: Revising and Editing



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Revising and editing are two tasks you must undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means only a little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers improve on their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. For athletes, dancers, designers...the more they practice, the stronger their performance. Writing similarly needs constant revision and editing to become as close to perfect as one can get it.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing, separately. So, you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you revise, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you edit, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words; fix problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure; and improve your writing style. And that will make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing--the end product of your best efforts.

Tip

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to ensure they look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes which provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way (constructively) and have high expectations for your work. Train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

What is Revision?

Revising is looking for ways to make your ideas clearer, stronger, and more convincing. When revising, you might add, cut, move, or change whole sentences or paragraphs. Revising is far more than just editing because, editing is correcting grammar, style, usage, and punctuation. Revising is really a re-**vision** of your entire essay: ideas, organization, development, grammar, and mechanics. You can follow the steps outlined below while revising.

So, how do you revise? There's one main thing to keep in mind when revising: revise from "big" to "small." There are three main parts to revision which we will be covering in this section which follow the illustration below:

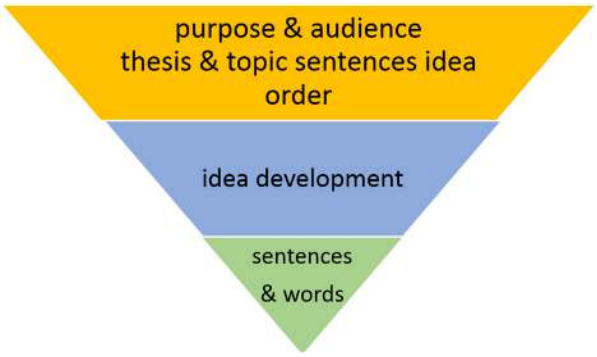


Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Revision Check-list

Directions: Print out a clean copy of the essay you plan to revise. Follow the steps below, marking your revision notes on this clean copy. Your instructor may want you to turn in this draft with revision notes.

Part I: Global Revisions

1. **Revise for unity:** When you revise for unity, you are revising to make sure all of your points are related to your main point—they unite to support your main point. Sometimes it is easy to drift away from your main point, so you want to check each paragraph closely to make sure it is working to prove your thesis. Look for topic sentences that support your thesis. Then examine each paragraph, making sure every single sentence in the paragraph is working to support the topic sentence.
2. **Revise for support, detail, and analysis**: Your support is your primary evidence, your quotes. Your detail is usually included in your explanation portion of your PIE paragraph that helps clarify the relationship of the support to the topic sentence, and your analysis is where you have explained the quote to make it clear to the reader how it supports your point. When revising, you want to make sure you have enough support, detail, and analysis to fully develop your point. Remember that you want to assume your reader is educated, but not necessarily abreast of the topics you are discussing. Mark on your page where you can include more support or better support. Identify how the two quotes relate to each other.
3. **Revise for coherence:** When revising for coherence, you are checking to make sure that all of the support connects to make a clear, well-developed argument. Coherence is the glue that connects all of the parts together and allows the reader to easily follow the argument. The best way to improve coherence is to add transitions. Transitions are words, phrases, and sentences that connect ideas so that writing moves smoothly from one point to another. Transitions can be used to connect sentences within a paragraph, as well as to connect one paragraph to another.

Part II: Local Revisions—Sentences structure, grammar, syntax, and word choice

Directions: After you have complete all of the global revisions, follow these steps to revise for local issues in your writing.

1. Once you have marked all the grammar errors in your sentences, read through your essay again. This time look for places where you can combine sentences so that your sentence lengths are varied.

2. Read through your essay again, looking for places where you can make the sentence clearer or more concise by using more descriptive language. (Sometimes, if you find the right word, you can say something in one word that originally took you four words.)

3. Now you want to check all of your quotes. Check to make sure you have quoted the text exactly, that you have cited your sources properly, and that you have punctuated your citation correctly.

4. Start with the last sentence of your essay. Read through your entire essay from bottom to top **out loud**, looking at the sentence structure, grammar, and language.

5. If there is a particular grammar issue that you know you struggle with, read through your entire essay once just looking for that one error in your sentences. (Try not to get distracted. Staying focused on one error will really help you catch that particular error.) If you struggle with multiple errors, give each error one full read through from bottom to top.

6. Check your formatting one more time. Have you followed MLA style: 1" margins, double-spaced (even on the first page where you have your name block), page numbers with last name starting on the first page.

Creating Unity and Coherence

Follow your outline closely. That gives a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. Sometimes, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may suffer. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense; When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

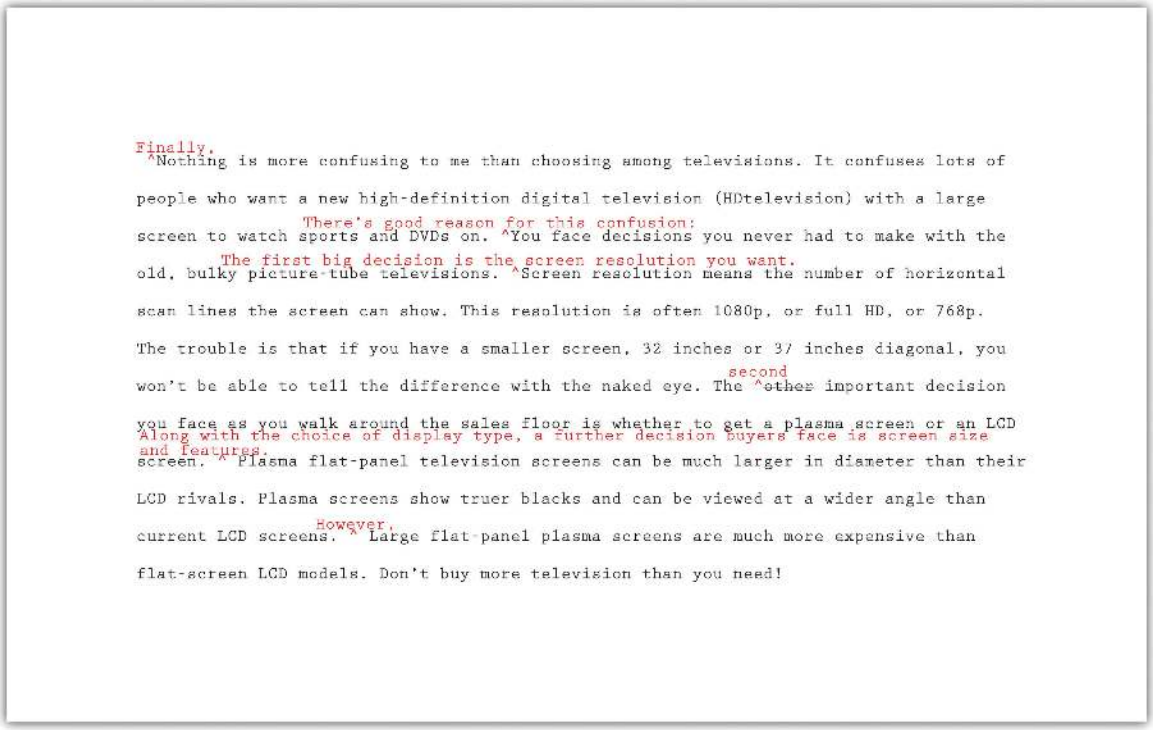
Tip

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes. (This is also a good time to give your draft to another person to see if they are confused anywhere.)

Tip

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

Below is an example of a page of Andi's edited essay. They chose to make the changes on paper so they could get a good view of how the whole paper flows together. It is easier to do this on a printed paper than on the computer screen.



Finally,
^Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. ^Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The ^~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ^ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ^ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

There's good reason for this confusion:
The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.
second
Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.
However,

Exercise 1

Answer the following questions about Andi's revised paragraph.

A. 1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to the paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
2. What transition words or phrases did Andi add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

B. Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look out for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language. More information about style and word choice can also be found in Chapter 11, "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style."

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.

  Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.

  Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as…is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.

  Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy.

  A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.

  Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy.

  A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb** *to be:* Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can. See also "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style."

  Wordy: It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

  Revised: Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- **Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

  My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.

  Revised: The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

  My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

? Exercise 2

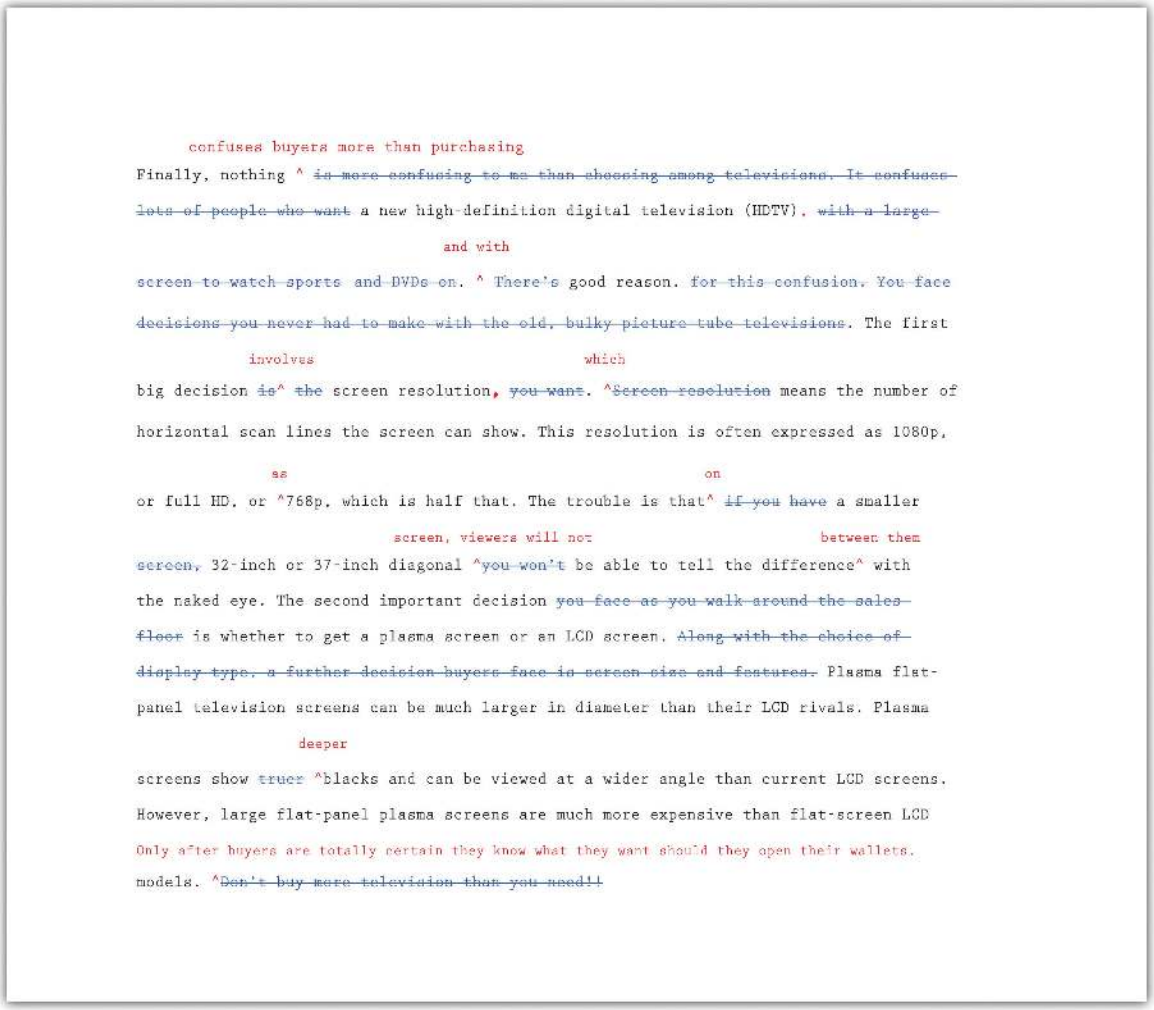
Now return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate. For more information about word choice and academic style, see Chapter 11.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to *bummer*, *kewl*, and *rad*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about "people" rather than "guys" unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don't*, *I am* in place of *I'm*, *have not* in place of *haven't*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech. Avoiding using contractions will also help you find proofreading mistakes.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.
- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are *allusion/illusion*, *complement/compliment*, *council/counsel*, *concurrent/consecutive*, *founder/flounder*, and *historic/historical*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for *thing*, *people*, *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *interesting*, *stuff*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Andi made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. They had already incorporated the changes for improving unity and coherence.



confuses buyers more than purchasing
Finally, nothing ^ ~~is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want~~ a new high-definition digital television (HDTV). ~~with a large~~
and with
~~screen to watch sports and DVDs on.~~ ^ There's good reason. ~~for this confusion. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture tube televisions~~. The first
involves which
big decision ~~is~~^ ~~the~~ screen resolution, ~~you want~~. ^~~Screen resolution~~ means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p,
as on
or full HD, or ^768p, which is half that. The trouble is that^ ~~if you have~~ a smaller
screen, viewers will not between them
~~screen,~~ 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal ^~~you won't~~ be able to tell the difference^ with the naked eye. The second important decision ~~you face as you walk around the sales floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma
deeper
screens show ~~truer~~ ^blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD
Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.
models. ^~~Don't buy more television than you need!!~~

? Exercise 3

1. Answer the following questions about Andi's revised paragraph:

A. 1. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Andi's writing.
2. Do you agree with the changes that Andi made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
3. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun *you* have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

B. Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their draft to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called peer review.

Reading Your Own Drafts

Writers tend to read over their own papers pretty quickly, with the knowledge of what they are trying to argue already in their minds. Reading in this way can cause you to skip over gaps in your written argument because the gap-filler is in your head. A problem occurs when your reader falls into these gaps. Your reader wants you to make the necessary connections from one thought or sentence to the next. When you don't, the reader can become confused or frustrated. Think about when you read something and you struggle to find the most important points or what the writer is trying to say. Isn't that annoying? Doesn't it make you want to quit reading and surf the web or call a friend?

Reading aloud

If you go to a tutoring session, you will probably hear the tutor say, "We always read papers out loud—would you like to read yours, or would you like to hear me read it?" Reading aloud has many benefits. Most people have far more experience listening to and speaking English than they do reading and editing it on the printed page. When reading your draft out loud or listening to someone else read it, your brain gets the information in a new way, and you may notice things that you didn't see before.

As listeners, we need the order of ideas in a paper to make sense. We can't flip back and forth from page to page to try to figure out what is going on or find information we need. When you hear your paper read out loud, you may recognize that you need to re-order the information in it or realize that there are gaps in your explanation. Listeners also need transitions to help us get from one main idea to the next. When you hear your paper, you may recognize places where you have moved from one topic to another too abruptly.

You may also hear errors in your sentences. Sometimes we leave out a word, mess things up as we copy and paste text, or make a grammatical mistake. These kinds of errors can be hard to see on the page, but sentences that contain them are very likely to sound wrong. For native speakers of English (and some non-native speakers, too), reading out loud is one of the most powerful proofreading techniques around.

Sometimes sentences aren't grammatically incorrect, but they are still awkward in some way—too long, too convoluted, too repetitive. Problems like these are often easily heard. Hearing your paper can also help you get a sense of whether the tone is right. Does it sound too formal? Too chatty or casual? What kind of impression will your voice in this paper make on a reader? Sometimes hearing your words helps you get a more objective sense of the impression you are creating—listening puts in you in something more like the position your reader will be in as he/she moves through your text.

Work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although sharing your writing may feel uncomfortable at first, remember that each writer is working towards the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for a peer review session.

This feels a little silly.

Reading aloud (or listening to your writing being read) takes some getting used to, but give it a try. You may be surprised at how much it can speed up your revision process!



Video 8.1.1

Three-step revision process. **Authored by:** pattheprofessor. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Peer Review Comments

Once you have a draft, get a person you trust to read your rough draft, and then ask them to talk to you about what they did and didn't understand. (Now is not the time to talk about proofreading stuff, so make sure they ignore those issues for the time being). You will likely get one of the following responses or a combination of them:

If your listener/reader has tons of questions about what you are saying, then you probably need to explain more. Let's say you are writing a paper on piranhas, and your reader says, "What's a piranha? Why do I need to know about them? How would I identify one?" Those are vital questions that you clearly need to answer in your paper. You need more detail and elaboration.

If your reader seems confused, you probably need to explain more clearly. So if he says, "Are there piranhas in the lakes around here?" you may not need to give more examples, but rather focus on making sure your examples and points are clear.

If your reader looks bored and can repeat back to you more details than she needs to know to get your point, you probably explained too much. Excessive detail can also be confusing, because it can bog the reader down and keep her from focusing on your main points. You want your reader to say, "So it seems like your paper is saying that piranhas are misunderstood creatures that are essential to South American ecosystems," not, "Uh… piranhas are important?" or, "Well, I know you said piranhas don't usually attack people, and they're usually around 10 inches long, and some people keep them in aquariums as pets, and dolphins are one of their predators, and…a bunch of other stuff, I guess?"

Sometimes it's not the amount of explanation that matters, but the word choice and tone you adopt. Your word choice and tone need to match your audience's expectations. For example, imagine you are researching piranhas; you find an article in National Geographic and another one in an academic journal for scientists. How would you expect the two articles to sound? National Geographic is written for a popular audience; you might expect it to have sentences like "The piranha generally lives in shallow rivers and streams in South America." The scientific journal, on the other hand, might use much more technical language because it's written for an audience of specialists. A sentence like "*Serrasalmus piraya* lives in fresh and brackish intercoastal and proto-arboreal sub-tropical regions between the 45th and 38th parallels" might not be out of place in the journal. Generally, you want your reader to know enough material to understand the points you are making. It's like the old forest/trees metaphor. If you give the reader nothing but trees, she won't see the forest (your thesis, the reason for your paper). If you give her a big forest and no trees, she won't know how you got to the forest (she might say, "Your point is fine, but you haven't proven it to me"). You want the reader to say, "Nice forest, and those trees really help me to see it."

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: _____

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

1. This essay is about_____.
2. Your main points in this essay are_____.
3. What I most liked about this essay is_____.
4. These three points struck me as your strongest:

   a. Point: _____

   Why: _____

   b. Point: _____

   Why: _____

   c. Point: _____

   Why: _____
5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:

   a. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because_____

   b. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because _____

   c. Where: _____

   Needs improvement because _____
6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is _____.

Here is an additional, more specific peer review resource that you may use.

Writing at Work

One of the reasons why word-processing programs build in a 'reviewing' feature is that workgroups have become a common feature in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a workgroup and their supervisors often critique group members' work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final product.

Exercise 4

Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other's draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback as well as constructive criticism and to be courteous and polite in your responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay.The peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might receive feedback from more than one reader. In this situation, you may receive feedback from some readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

? Exercise 5

Work with two partners. Go back to Exercises 3 in this lesson and compare your responses to Activity A, about Andi's paragraph, with your partners'. Recall Andi's purpose for writing, and their audience. Then, working individually, discuss where you agree and where you disagree about revision needs.

Proofreading, Editing, and Presentation

In Peer Review, the focus is on the larger content and structural issues, but when you have revised those parts of your paper, it is also important to edit and proofread for sentence structure, grammar, and formatting.

PROOFREADING QUESTIONS

Sentence Structure

Do all of your sentences make sense?

Are they connected with coordinators (FANBOYS) and subordinators to clarify meaning?

Transitions

Have you used additional transition words to help the reader understand how your sentences relate to each other?

Grammar

Have you made sure you implemented what the class has practiced, and what you need to work on?

Vocabulary

Have you used some of the words (especially verbs) you have learned?

Are they used correctly?

Formatting

Have you formatted your paper according to MLA rules?

Is the essay in a folder?

Have you turned in everything your instructor has asked you to turn in? Typically, this may include (from top to bottom

- The final draft
- Feedback Sheet
- Peer Review sheet
- Rough draft
- Outline
- Brainstorm

Formatting

Remember to use the proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college, will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style guides.

To ensure the format is correct, follow any specific instructions, and make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Reflection

? Exercise 6

Use this list to think about the question: **What went well while writing your essay and what gave you trouble?**

HOCs (Higher Order Concerns)

- Understanding the reading
- Summarizing the issue (for the introduction)
- Coming up with the thesis
- Sorting and organizing the information
- Deciding on the topics of the body paragraphs
- Organizing the body paragraphs
  - Writing the topic sentences
  - Including information (details)
  - Incorporating quotations
  - Explaining or interpreting those details
  - Summing up (concluding) the paragraphs
- Writing the conclusion

LOCs (Later Order Concerns)

- Writing clear sentences
- Using subordinators and coordinators (FANBOYS)
- Using transitions to connect ideas
- Checking grammar _____
- Proofreading for spelling and typos
- Formatting (MLA)

Write 1.5 pages (using separate paragraphs) and answer the question at the top of the page.

Also, if something gave you trouble, how did you work on it? Or, what will you do to work on it next time?

The following video offers a quick overview of the revision process, moving from "big" concepts to "small" sentence and language items.



Video 8.1.1

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8.2: Stage 1- The Big Picture



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Higher Order Concerns for Revision

Regardless of writers' levels of experience or areas of expertise, many struggle with revision, a component of the writing process that encompasses everything from transformative changes in content and argumentation to minor corrections in grammar and punctuation. Perhaps because revision involves so many forms of modification, it is the focus of most scientific writing guides and handbooks. Revision can be daunting; how does one progress from initial drafts (called "rough drafts" for good reason) to a polished piece of scholarly writing?

Developing a process for revision can help writers produce thoughtful, polished texts and grow their written communication skills. Consider, then, a systematic approach to revision, including strategies to employ at every step of the process.

A System for Approaching Revision



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Generally, revision should be approached in a top-down manner by addressing **higher-order concerns (HOCs)** before moving on to **lower-order concerns (LOCs)**. In writing studies, the term "higher order" is used to denote major or global issues such as thesis, argumentation, and organization, whereas "lower order" is used to denote minor or local issues such as grammar and mechanics.[1] The more analytical work of revising HOCs often has ramifications for the entire piece. Perhaps in refining the argument, a writer will realize that the discussion section does not fully consider the study's implications. Or, a writer will try a new organizational scheme and find that a paragraph no longer fits and should be cut. Such revisions may have far-reaching implications for the text.

Dedicating time to tweaking wording or correcting grammatical errors is unproductive if the sentence will be changed or deleted. Focusing on HOCs before LOCs allows writers to revise more effectively and efficiently.

Revision Strategies

Bearing in mind the general system of revising from HOCs to LOCs, you can employ several revision strategies.

- **Begin by evaluating how your argument addresses your rhetorical situation**—that is, the specific context surrounding your writing, including the audience, exigence, and constraints.[2]
  - For example, you may write an article describing a new treatment. If the target journal's audience comes from a variety of disciplines, you may need to include substantial background explanation, consider the implications for practitioners and scholars in multiple fields, and define technical terms. By contrast, if you are addressing a highly specialized audience, you

may be able to dispense with many of the background explanations and definitions because of your shared knowledge base. You may consider the implications only for specialists, as they are your primary audience. Because this sort of revision affects the entire text, beginning by analyzing your rhetorical situation is effective.

- **Analyze your thesis or main argument for clarity**.
- **Evaluate the global organization of your text by writing a reverse outline**. Unlike traditional outlines, which are written before drafting, reverse outlines reflect the content of written drafts.
  - In a separate document or in your text's margins, record the main idea of each paragraph. Then, consider whether the order of your ideas is logical. This method also will help you identify ideas that are out of place or digressive. You may also evaluate organization by printing the text and cutting it up so that each paragraph appears on a separate piece of paper. You may then easily reorder the paragraphs to test different organizational schemes.

Reverse Outlines

Reverse outlines are a great way to see how your actual essay has deviated from your original outline, and also see if the "new" outline is rigorous with its thesis statements, topic sentences, and supporting details all tying in together.

Process:

Set your draft aside for a while (at least a day) so you can approach revision processes with a fresh mind. First, re-read your draft and consider the draft in the context of your purpose and audience. If the draft doesn't "fit" your writing purpose or audience, you will need to do some major re-thinking and revision.

Then, still on the level of big ideas, consider your thesis and topic sentences to make sure they are thesis and topic sentences, and that they relate to one another. Ask and answer the following questions:

- As a reader, can I clearly identify a thesis and topic sentences?
- Do I actually have a thesis with a topic and an angle/argument/assertion about that topic?
- Do all of my topic sentences and their units of support also have topics and angles, and do my topic sentences relate



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

One method that may help you answer these questions is to annotate your draft and do a reverse outline. Annotation involves noting the main ideas in each section of the essay. Number your paragraphs in the essay. Then make a numbered list and write the main idea of each paragraph, in the order in which the ideas actually occur in your draft, and analyze your list. Questions to ask yourself when analyzing your reverse outline include:

- Are the ideas organized into categories or groups that make sense?
- Is the order of ideas (topic sentences and units of support) logical, given the thesis?
- Are there paragraphs that should be shifted to other locations, because they really relate to different topic sentences and units of support?
- Is there an overall introduction-body-conclusion structure?
- Does the introduction appropriately introduce the topic of the essay, interest a reader, and offer the main idea?
- Does the conclusion re-state the main idea?

The following video explains how to do a reverse outline:



[Rachael Cayley's blog entry on Reverse Outlines], mentioned at the end of the video, is a useful resource for information on doing "big" revisions.

The reverse outline mentioned above is also known as a **post-draft outline**. Guidance for how to complete one for an entire essay draft, as well as for an individual problematic paragraph, are found in this presentation.

Post-Draft Outline

AM **By Alexis McMillan-Clifton**
March 16, 2011

Present

View on **Prezi.com**

Editing: Reverse Outline. **Authored by:** Academic Skills, The University of Melbourne. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

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8.3: Stage 2- Fleshing Out Your Ideas

Revision Stage 2: Idea Development



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Reverse outlining (from stage 1 of revision) not only helps you with idea structure; it can also help you analyze idea development to determine whether you have the right amount of writing at various places in your essay. If you see multiple main ideas in one paragraph, for example, you may not have given each idea enough development.

As you revise for idea development, make sure you have at least a paragraph–and often more–for each topic sentence idea. Make sure that you have developed your paragraphs and units of support with examples and details appropriate to your purpose and audience. For example, consider the following two paragraphs. What characterizes the well-developed one, which leaves you, as a reader, more satisfied that you have a fuller understanding?

> Traveling to Tokyo was a revelation, especially when compared with traveling to New York City. While New Yorkers are actually polite as a group, New York is dirtier and transportation is less timely. And it's definitely not quiet! On the other hand, Tokyo is ultra-modern in terms of transportation and services. Things run on time. For a large city, it's clean, quiet, and the citizens are polite.
>
> Traveling to Tokyo was a revelation, especially when compared with traveling to New York City. First of all, Tokyo is ultra-modern in terms of transportation and services. Coming into the airport, we had the option of shipping our bags to our destination, thus avoiding the hassle of hauling luggage and allowing us to take inexpensive public transportation to our hotel. The airport train runs frequently, quickly, and on time; it actually leaves when it's supposed to leave. In the airport as well as in other train stations, there's often a white-gloved and uniformed "conductor" on the station platform to help travelers get to the right track, stand in the right place to board the train, and signal to the train conductor that all travelers have boarded so that the train can depart on time. To board, passengers line up quietly and politely, so that boarding can occur quickly. Within the train, passengers are quiet – a microcosm of what to expect in all public spaces, on the street, in restaurants, in museums, and more. People do not talk loudly or play loud music. Sounds indicating the upcoming station stop are gentle chimes. On the other hand, New York offers a blend of new and old in terms of transportation and services. While the relatively new airport train runs efficiently, there are no special luggage services or persons designated to help travelers. The airport train links to a subway system to get into the heart of New York City, and subway cars are often old, in keeping with the age of the system itself. Boarding may be a challenge if there are a lot of people; no one lines up, but you're still expected to get onto the train quickly. On board, you may experience a blend of sounds ranging from talking to music. Whatever you hear, there's usually no attempt to mute or soften the sound. Stations are announced with loud bells and announcements, a precursor of the sound level you can expect on New York City streets. Yet despite their differences, each city has a special appeal. While Tokyo seems to focus on creating a pleasant public experience, New York is sheer kinetic energy.

Even though the more developed paragraph is relatively long, and might be successfully broken into multiple paragraphs within a unit of support, it includes the following characteristics that make it well-developed:

- clear topic sentence that indicates a comparison of the two cities
- follow-through on the order of the comparison indicated in the topic sentence (whereas the less developed paragraph switches that order)
- multiple examples and details for the points about transportation, sound, and timeliness
- concluding sentence that summarizes and also moves a reader to an additional insight

As noted in the text *The Word on College Reading and Writing*, "here are some tips on what to strive for and what to avoid when it comes to supporting details." [1]

Good support	Weak Support
• Is relevant and focused (sticks to the point). • Is well developed. • Provides sufficient detail. • Is vivid and descriptive. • Is well organized. • Is coherent and consistent. • Highlights key terms and ideas.	• Lacks a clear connection to the point that it's meant to support. • Lacks development. • Lacks detail or gives too much detail. • Is vague and imprecise. • Lacks organization. • Seems disjointed (ideas don't clearly relate to each other). • Lacks emphasis of key terms and ideas.

Although the following video focuses on illustrative writing, the concepts offered about idea development can be applied to essay writing for any purpose, including logical argument, research writing, and essays using different patterns of development. The video provides examples of sparsely-developed and well-developed paragraphs, using examples and details:





Writing an Illustrative Paragraph or Essay. **Authored by:** Center for elearning. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

Note: Some content in the video "Writing an Illustrative Paragraph or Essay" is presented visually. You may **listen to this video with audio description**.

Revising for Flow of Information

In the first revision stage, revising for idea structure, purpose, and audience, you look at the overall logical order of information to determine if the topic sentences and units of support are in a logical order, given the argument in the thesis. Check to see if you've used transition words effectively to show the linkage from one topic sentence and unit of support to the next. This is revising for flow of information on a macro level.

However, you also should revise for flow of information on a micro or paragraph level. Flow on the paragraph level deals with how easily one sentence moves into the next for your reader. The previous page on Revising for Style introduced the concept of "sentence fluency" or flow (see also "Cohesion"); here are examples of good and bad flow in paragraphs, from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles' writing guides website. Can you tell which paragraph has better flow of information?

1. "Costa Rica is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. The southern part of Costa Rica is characterized by dense rain forests, which contain some of the world's most unusual wildlife. Hoping to get a bird's eye view of these animals, tourists take zip lining tours through the top canopy of the rain forest. Located in Central America, it borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. Some of the interesting creatures found in these forests include tree frogs, white-faced monkeys, and sloths."
2. "Costa Rica is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Located in Central America, it borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. The southern part of Costa Rica is characterized by dense rain forests, which contain some of the world's most unusual wildlife. Some of the interesting creatures found in these forests include tree frogs, white-faced monkeys, and sloths. Hoping to get a bird's eye view of these animals, tourists take zip lining tours through the top canopy of the rain forest." [1]

Paragraph 2 has a better flow. It starts with Costa Rica's general location, and then moves to a particular location within Costa Rica. The second sentence ends by mentioning "unusual wildlife," which is a more general lead-in to the third sentence in which the author specifies the wildlife. The fourth sentence links to the third by mentioning "these animals" again, before it moves to talking about tourists.

In contrast, Paragraph 1 hops around from wildlife to tourists to general location to specific wildlife. While the information is the same, the flow of this paragraph makes it more difficult to read and digest the information.

So, much of the way to revise for flow on the paragraph level is to consider the order and linking of your sentences. However, flow on the paragraph level also deals with sentence structure and how easily the sentences "sound" and can be read.

Here's an example from Daniel's essay in progress. Can you tell which paragraph has the better flow of information?

1. Yet if you look at these arguments one by one, you can see that these skills may be addressed online, albeit in a slightly different way. Public speaking can be taught online because, first of all, online speakers may very well be able to see their audience's reaction and adjust their tone and message accordingly. Skype, Zoom, and other technologies offer real-time, audio and visual experiences that link speaker and audience. Although they are dispersed and not in the same room, the speaker can still see what's going on with other participants and can see from their attitudes and expressions whether they are engaged and whether tone or content needs to be altered. Even in asynchronous environments, audience response may be so immediate that the speaker can respond in almost-real time (think of Rosanne's posts, quick audience reaction on Twitter, and her quick responses). The environment may not be exactly the same as a room with everyone in it, but the skills of observation, situation analysis, and adjustment can still be taught and learned online.
2. Online speakers can learn speaking skills in a slightly different way. Online speakers can see their audience's reaction. Online speakers can use Skype and Zoom. They also have other technologies to see speech attendees. They can see attitudes and expressions. Online speakers can respond in almost-real time. They can learn how to observe. They can learn how to analyze the situation in real time. They can learn to adjust their tone and message accordingly, based on their observations and analyses.

In this example, although the information is almost the same, Paragraph 1 has the best flow. Paragraph 2 is "choppy," because Daiel, at a very initial writing stage, used the same subject-verb sentence structure for all of the sentences in the paragraph. Try to vary your sentence patterns, as well as use transition words, to create an easy flow.



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

As you revise for flow of information within paragraphs, review the following:

- sentence order
- transition use
- sentence structure

Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Andi stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset them enough that they digressed from the main topic of their third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store they visited. When revising the essay, they deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Andi's changes, and the second time with them.

> Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The ~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!

Exercise 1

A. Answer the following two questions about Andi's paragraph:
1. Do you agree with Andi's decision to make the deletions? Did they cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

B. Now start to revise the first draft of an essay you have written. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with cohesion. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Writing at Work

Many companies hire copyeditors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects. Copyeditors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

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8.4: Stage 3- Sentences, Words, Format

Revision Stage 3: Sentences, Words, Format



Figure: from Amazon AWS

The third and final stage of revision deals with sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, and all aspects of language use and format. Although many beginning writers equate the concept of revision wholly with language use, know that revising for these issues should be the final stage in revision, *after* you have reviewed and verified your thesis, topic sentences, and idea order and development.

Revision stage 3 is often called proofreading which, again, should be the very last step in revising an essay. Really, however, it should be called "editing" because reviewing for word choice and sentence structure should happen before proofreading, which is simply checking for mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and formatting. Once you move to stage 3, it's time to consider lower-order concerns related to sentence structure, punctuation, and language use. Lower-order concerns are issues that don't *necessarily* interrupt understanding of the writing by themselves.

Higher-Order Concerns Revision Stages 1 & 2	**Lower-Order Concerns** Revision Stage 3
Audience	Grammar
Thesis Sentence	Sentence Structure
Topic Sentences	Punctuation
Organization of Ideas	Spelling
Development of Ideas (& citation as needed)	Citation Format

Are Higher-Order Concerns More Important than Lower-Order Concerns?

No, not necessarily. Higher-order concerns tend to interrupt a reader's understanding of the writing, and that's why they need to be addressed first. However, if a lower-order concern becomes a major obstacle, then it naturally becomes a higher priority. For example, consider an essay that uses semi-colons incorrectly, each and every time, where there should be commas. Consider how many times in writing you actually use commas (a lot!). Your reader may start to focus on the error more than the content of your ideas, in the way that a driver and her passengers start to count the potholes they hit on a stretch of road desperately in need of repair. The purpose of proofreading to find and correct lower-order concerns in order to make the road smooth, so that your readers, like the driver, can concentrate on the content of the journey, and not the bumps in the road.

To address lower-order concerns, consider individual sentences in terms of grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Also consider conventions of citation format, if you have used sources. Ask and answer the following questions:

- Are the sentences grammatically correct?
- Is the sentence structure clear and varied?
- Is language used clearly, in a way appropriate to your reading audience?
- Is the punctuation correct?
- Is the documentation format correct, if the essay uses sources?

Many language items can be revised by isolating and examining different elements of your written text. Read the text sentence by sentence, looking for grammatical and punctuation errors to correct and asking yourself if your sentence structure and word choice are as clear as possible. Remember, a sentence may be grammatically correct and still confuse readers. If you notice a pattern—say, a tendency to misplace modifiers or use unnecessary commas—read the paper looking only for that error so that you can find and

correct it throughout. Also realize that spell-checks, even though their useful, do not always replace a close reading for errors. [*The error in the previous sentence is intentional, to prove the point. Can you find it?*]

Revising for Format

Although format is the least important aspect of revising, it's still important that your essay be readable and use certain conventions, such as the following:

- Use 10-12 point size, depending on the font.
- Choose a simple, easy-to-read font (e.g., Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman).
- Use 1-inch margins.
- Check with your instructor about spacing and layout preferences. If you single-space, then left-justify all paragraphs and leave a space between paragraphs; if you double-space, then indent the first line of each paragraph 5 spaces (by using the "Tab" key).
- Put your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the essay.
- Put your last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the essay.
- If you're writing a research essay, make sure to use correct citation format.

Revising for Style

The final stage of revising is often focused solely on "correctness": making sure that all the details are right, and that language is used according to the rules. However, revision stage 3 also offers a great opportunity to focus on your style, and allows you to craft the final product that best represents your unique perspective. Note that conscious work with style may help create more sophisticated writing (see "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style").



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

A writer's style is what sets his or her writing apart. Style is the way writing is dressed up (or down) to fit the specific context, purpose, content, and audience. Word choice, sentence structure, and the writer's voice all contribute to the style of a piece of writing. How a writer chooses words and structures sentences to achieve a certain effect creates a certain style in the writing. When Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls," he arranged his words to convey a sense of urgency and desperation. Had he written "These are bad times," it's likely he wouldn't have made such an impact.

Style is often considered and discussed within the context of literature. Novelists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and poets such as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman are well known for their distinctive literary styles. But journalists, scientists, historians, and mathematicians also may have distinctive writing styles. Style depends on both the writer and the context of the writing (the purpose and intended audience). For example, the first-person narrative style of a popular magazine such as *National Geographic* is quite different from the objective, third-person, expository style of a research journal such as *Scientific American* because, although the purpose of each publication is to inform, they are informing different audiences in different contexts.

Not Just Right and Wrong

Style is not a matter of right and wrong but of what is appropriate for a particular purpose, setting, and audience. Consider the following two passages, which were written by the same author on the same topic with the same main idea, yet have very different styles:

> "Experiments show that *Heliconius* butterflies are less likely to ovipost on host plants that possess eggs or egg-like structures. These egg mimics are an unambiguous example of a plant trait evolved in response to a host-restricted group of insect herbivores."
>
> "*Heliconius* butterflies lay their eggs on Passiflora vines. In defense, the vines seem to have evolved fake eggs that make it look to the butterflies as if eggs have already been laid on them." (Example from Myers, G. (1992). Writing biology: Texts in

the social construction of scientific knowledge. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 150.)

What changed was the audience. The first passage was written for a professional journal read by other biologists, so the style is authoritative and impersonal, using technical terminology suited to a professional audience. The second passage, written for a popular science magazine, uses a more dramatic style, setting up a conflict between the butterflies and the vines, and using familiar words to help readers from non-scientific backgrounds visualize the scientific concept being described. Each style is appropriate for its particular audience.

Elements of Style

Many elements of writing contribute to an author's style, but three of the most important are word choice, sentence fluency, and voice.

Word choice



Figure: from Amazon AWS.

Most writers strive to be concise and precise, weeding out unnecessary words and choosing the exact word to convey meaning. Precise words—active verbs, concrete nouns, specific adjectives—help the reader visualize the sentence. No matter what style is appropriate, formal or informal, serious or humorous, clarity and precision are goals to strive for in terms of style. (For specific practice with this, see "Clarity, Conciseness, and Style.")

When you consider word choice, ask yourself if your words convey your main ideas clearly, and if you are you using language that can be understood by your reading audience (most likely an adult, general audience, such as people who read blogs and newspapers).

After you revise for clarity and precision of language, also look at the tone that your words create. Are you intentionally informal, formal, humorous, straightforward? Is your tone appropriate for the context of your writing: your purpose and audience? Are there breeches in tone that are jarring, such as very informal or slang phrases or a sarcastic comment in what is otherwise a piece of writing with a straightforward, professional tone?

Also consider enlivening your word choice. Not every word in an essay can be a "special" word, nor should it be. But if your writing in an area feels a little flat, the injection of a livelier word can have strong rhetorical and emotional impact on your reader. Think of these words as jewels in the right setting. Often swapping out "to be" verbs (e.g., is, was, were, etc.) with more action-packed verbs has immediate, positive impact. Also look for words such as "things," "very," or "many," which you can replace with more precise terminology.

Exercise 1

Now return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

Sentence fluency

Sentence fluency is the flow and rhythm of phrases and sentences. Writers use a variety of sentences with different lengths and rhythms to achieve different effects. They use parallel structures within sentences and paragraphs to reflect parallel ideas, but also know how to avoid monotony by varying their sentence structures. For example, a writer may consciously use a very short sentence in a paragraph to emphasize and draw attention to a particular idea.

When you revise for sentence fluency, consider the patterns of your sentences. Are they all direct subject-verb statements? Or are the sentences varied in pattern? Sentence length variety is an asset to your readers, as it helps maintain their interest. If you find a paragraph or two of your essay that uses many sentences of approximately the same length close together, work in those paragraphs on combining some short sentences or on breaking some long sentences apart.

Also ask yourself if any sentences are wordy, using too many words and phrases in places where much shorter phrases can be used? (e.g., phrases such as “concerning the matter of,” “the reason for,” and “it is a fact that,” or too many “of” or “to” phrases). There is nothing wrong with using repetitive sentence patterns or too many words as a starting point in a draft; the advantage of writing over speaking is that you can return to your sentences and words, rethink them, and revise them for more concise and precise style.

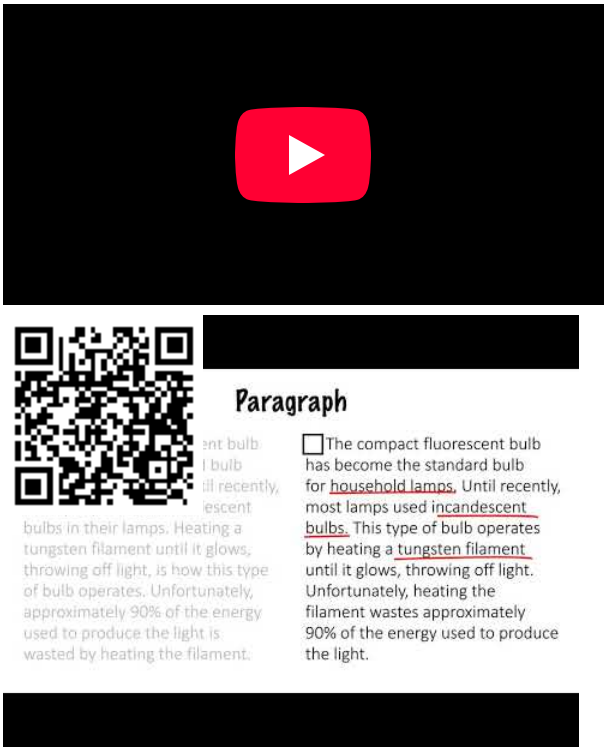
Voice

Voice is an essential element of style that reveals the writer’s personality. A writer’s voice can be impersonal or chatty, authoritative or reflective, objective or passionate, serious or funny. As you consider style when you revise, identify an adjective that you think best describes your voice and ask yourself if this is appropriate for your writing context, purpose, and audience.

How can you consider style consciously?

One method is to read an essay draft out loud, preferably to another person. Better yet, have another person read your draft to you. Note how that person interprets your words. Do they come across as you originally meant them to? If not, revise.

Another method is to simply ignore your essay draft for a few days, and then read it carefully as though you were reading another writer’s work for the first time. Planning some time between drafting and revising helps with all stages of the revising process, including style.



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8.5: Proofreading



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Proofreading: The Final Step

When proofreading, you examine the surface features of your text, such as spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment, including in-text citations and the Works Cited (bibliography) page.

Tip

Proofreading often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they *do* notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use *there*, *their*, and *they're* correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document..



Video 8.5.1

How to Proofread Tutorial: 10 Proofreading Techniques They Didn't Teach You in School. **Authored by:** David Taylor. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

The Importance of Spelling

Word-processing programs usually have a spell-checker, but you should still carefully check for misspellings in your words. This is because automatic spell-checkers may not always understand the **context** of a word, so if a word you used is actually another valid word, a spell-check program won't mark the word as a misspelling.

Misspelling a word might seem like a minor mistake, but it can reflect very poorly on a writer. It suggests one of two things: either the writer does not care enough about his work to proofread it, or he does not know his topic well enough to properly spell words related to it. Either way, spelling errors will make a reader less likely to trust a writer's authority.

The best way to ensure that a paper has no spelling errors is to look for them during the proofreading stage of the writing process. Being familiar with the most common errors will help you find (and fix) them during the writing and proofreading stage.

Sometimes a writer just doesn't know how to spell the word she wants to use. This may be because the word is technical jargon or comes from a language other than her own. Other times, it may be a proper name that she has not encountered before. Anytime you want to use a word but are unsure of how to spell it, do not guess. Instead, check a dictionary or other reference work to find its proper spelling.

Common Spelling Errors

Phonetic Errors

Phonetics is a field that studies the sounds of a language. However, English phonetics can be tricky: In English, the pronunciation of a word does not always relate to the way it is spelled. This can make spelling a challenge. Here are some common phonetic irregularities:

- A word can sound like it could be spelled multiple ways. For example: "concede" and "conceed" are the same phonetically, but only "concede" is the proper spelling.
- A word has silent letters that the writer may forget to include. T the "a" in "realize" is barely audible, but you need it to spell the word correctly.
- A word has double letters that the writer may forget to include. "Accommodate," for example, is frequently misspelled as "acommodate" or "accomodate."
- The writer may use double letters when they are not needed. The word "amend" has only one "m," but it is commonly misspelled with two.

Sometimes, words just aren't spelled the way they sound. "Right," for example, does not resemble its phonetic spelling whatsoever. Try to become familiar with words that have unusual or non-phonetic spellings so you can be on the lookout for them in your writing. But again, the best way to avoid these misspellings is to consult a dictionary whenever you're unsure of the correct spelling. Another thing to do is to keep a list for yourself of the words you know you have trouble with. Look for those words in particular when you proofread.

Homophones

"Bread" and "bred" sound the same but are spelled differently, and they mean completely different things. Two words with different meanings but the same pronunciation are called homophones. If you don't know which homophone is the right one to use, look both up in the dictionary to see which meaning (and spelling) you want. Common homophones include:

- right, rite, wright, and write
- read (most tenses of the verb) and reed
- read (past, past participle) and red
- rose (flower) and rose (past tense of rise)
- carat, caret, and carrot
- to, two, and too
- there, their, and they're
- its and it's

Typographical Errors

Some spelling errors are caused by the writer accidentally typing the wrong thing. Common typos include:

- Omitting letters from a word (typing "brthday" instead of "birthday," for example)
- Adding extra letters (typing "birthdayy")

- Transposing two letters in a word (typing “brithday”)
- Spacing words improperly (such as “myb irthday” instead of “my birthday”)

Being aware of these common mistakes when writing will help you avoid spelling errors.The Grammar section of this book offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college’s writing lab. In the meantime, use this checklist to help you edit your writing.

Checklist

Proofreading Your Writing

Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long, overpacked sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?
- Have I used commas correctly when joining sentence parts together?
- Have I used commas where periods should be?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed and not capitalized where it's not needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to*/*too*/*two*?

Tips

- Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write *principle* but wrote *principal* instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

- Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward, sentence by sentence, so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

  If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

How Can Technology Help?

You don't necessarily need to recruit a friend to read to you. There are a number of text-to-speech software applications and web-based services that will help you get your computer, smartphone, tablet, or e-book reader to read your paper out loud to you. One advantage of this approach is that an automated reader will definitely not cover up any errors for you! You can also control where it starts and stops, speed it up or slow it down, and have it re-read the same paragraph as many times as you want.

If you decide to experiment with this approach, there are many free text readers available. MS Word has a text-to-speech feature built in. Recent Android and iOS phones also have text-to-speech capabilities, which you can find under accessibility settings. You may also find text-to-speech software among your Windows or Mac computer's accessibility features.

If you decide you want to acquire specialized software, "text to speech," "TTS," and "text reader" are search terms that can help you find what is available.

Here are some differences to keep in mind as you choose the best reader for you:

- **Voice quality and selection:** how many voices can you choose from, and how natural do they sound?
- **Controls:** can you determine the speed and pitch of the speaker, where the reading starts and stops, etc.? Is there a pause button?
- **Applicability:** can you convert your text file into an audio file, download it, and listen to it on your phone or music player?
- **Text handling:** does the software highlight each word as it is read (which may be especially helpful for non-native English speakers and students with with learning differences)? Do you need to copy text and paste it into a new window, or can the program work directly within an application (like Word or Powerpoint), or does it just read the text on your screen?
- **Speed:** how many pages of text or words can be converted to voice at once? How quickly does the conversion happen?
- **Type of program:** do you need an active internet connection to use the program, or can you run it without internet access once it has been installed?

While synthetic voices continue to improve, they will likely not sound completely natural to you. But you may find that if you choose a favorite voice, you can get used to its intonation and pacing over time.

Proofreading Advice

The following video features two student tutors from the Writing and Reading Center at Fresno City College. In addition to great guidance about proofreading strategies, they also offer insights about what to expect when working with Writing Center tutors.



Video 8.5.1

Proofreading Tip #5: Read Your Papers Aloud BACKWARDS. **Authored by:** FCC Tutors. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube license.

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8.6: How to Say Nothing in 500 Words



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How to Say Nothing in 500 Words By Paul McHenry Roberts

**Note: This essay was written in the 1950s. The basics of good writing, however, haven't changed.

It's Friday afternoon, and you have almost survived another week of classes. You are just looking forward dreamily to the weekend when the English instructor says: "For Monday you will turn in a five hundred word composition on college football." Well, that puts a good hole in the weekend. You don't have any strong views on college football one way or the other. You get rather excited during the season and go to all the home games and find it rather more fun than not. On the other hand, the class has been reading Robert Hutchins in the anthology and perhaps Shaw's "EightyYard Run," and from the class discussion you have got the idea that the instructor thinks college football is for the birds. You are no fool. You can figure out what side to take. After dinner you get out the portable typewriter that you got for high school graduation. You might as well get it over with and enjoy Saturday and Sunday. Five hundred words is about two doublespaced pages with normal margins. You put in a sheet of paper, think up a title, and you're off:

WHY COLLEGE FOOTBALL SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

College football should be abolished because it's bad for the school and also for the players. The players are so busy practicing that they don't have any time for their studies. This, you feel, is a mighty good start. The only trouble is that it's only thirty-two words. You still have four hundred and sixty-eight to go, and you've pretty well exhausted the subject. It comes to you that you do your best thinking in the morning, so you put away the typewriter and go to the movies. But the next morning you have to do your washing and some math problems, and in the afternoon you go to the game. The English instructor turns up too, and you wonder if you've taken the right side after all. Saturday night you have a date, and Sunday morning you have to go to church. (You can't let English assignments interfere with your religion.) What with one thing and another, it's ten o'clock Sunday night before you get out the typewriter again. You make a pot of coffee and start to fill out your views on college football. Put a little meat on the bones.

WHY COLLEGE FOOTBALL SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

> In my opinion, it seems to me that college football should be abolished. The reason why I think this to be true is because I feel that football is bad for the colleges in nearly every respect. As Robert Hutchins says in his article in our anthology in which he discusses college football, it would be better if the colleges had race horses and had races with one another, because then the horses would not have to attend classes. I firmly agree with Mr. Hutchins on this point, and I am sure that many other students would agree too. One reason why it seems to me that college football is bad is that it has become too commercial. In the olden times when people played football just for the fun of it, maybe college football was all right, but they do not play college football just for the fun of it now as they used to in the old days. Nowadays college football is what you might call a big business. Maybe this is not true at all schools, and I don't think it is especially true here at State, but certainly this is the case at most colleges and universities in America nowadays, as Mr. Hutchins points out in his very interesting article. Actually the coaches and alumni go around to the high schools and offer the high school stars large salaries to come to their colleges and play football for them. There was one case where a high school star was offered a convertible if he would play football for a certain college. Another reason for abolishing college football is that it is bad for the players. They do not have time to get a college education, because they are so busy playing football. A football player has to practice every afternoon from three to six and then he is so tired that he can't concentrate on his studies. He just feels like dropping off to sleep after dinner, and then the next day he goes to his classes without having studied and maybe he fails the test. (Good ripe stuff so far, but you're still a hundred and fifty-one words from home. One more push.) Also I think college

> football is bad for the colleges and the universities because not very many students get to participate in it. Out of a college of ten thousand students only seventy-five or a hundred play football, if that many. Football is what you might call a spectator sport. That means that most people go to watch it but do not play it themselves. (Four hundred and fifteen. Well, you still have the conclusion, and when you retype it, you can make the margins a little wider.) These are the reasons why I agree with Mr. Hutchins that college football should be abolished in American colleges and universities.

On Monday you turn it in, moderately hopeful, and on Friday it comes back marked “weak in content” and sporting a big “D.” This essay is exaggerated a little, not much. The English instructor will recognize it as reasonably typical of what an assignment on college football will bring in. He knows that nearly half of the class will contrive in five hundred words to say that college football is too commercial and bad for the players. Most of the other half will inform him that college football builds character and prepares one for life and brings prestige to the school. As he reads paper after paper all saying the same thing in almost the same words, all bloodless, five hundred words dripping out of nothing, he wonders how he allowed himself to get trapped into teaching English when he might have had a happy and interesting life as an electrician or a confidence man. Well, you may ask, what can you do about it? The subject is one on which you have few convictions and little information. Can you be expected to make a dull subject interesting? As a matter of fact, this is precisely what you are expected to do. This is the writer's essential task. All subjects, except sex, are dull until somebody makes them interesting. The writer's job is to find the argument, the approach, the angle, the wording that will take the reader with him. This is seldom easy, and it is particularly hard in subjects that have been much discussed: College Football, Fraternities, Popular Music, Is Chivalry Dead?, and the like. You will feel that there is nothing you can do with such subjects except repeat the old bromides. But there are some things you can do which will make your papers, if not throbbingly alive, at least less insufferably tedious than they might otherwise be.

Avoid the Obvious Content

Say the assignment is college football. Say that you've decided to be against it. Begin by putting down the arguments that come to your mind: it is too commercial, it takes the students' minds off their studies, it is hard on the players, it makes the university a kind of circus instead of an intellectual center, for most schools it is financially ruinous. Can you think of any more arguments, just off hand? All right. Now when you write your paper, make sure that you don' t use any of the material on this list. If these are the points that leap to your mind, they will leap to everyone else's too, and whether you get a “C” or a “D” may depend on whether the instructor reads your paper early when he is fresh and tolerant or late, when the sentence “In my opinion, college football has become too commercial,” inexorably repeated, has bought him to the brink of lunacy. Be against college football for some reason or reasons of your own. If they are keen and perceptive ones, that's splendid. But even if they are trivial or foolish or indefensible, you are still ahead so long as they are not everybody else's reasons too. Be against it because the colleges don't spend enough money on it to make it worthwhile, because it is bad for the characters of the spectators, because the players are forced to attend classes, because the football stars hog all the beautiful women, because it competes with baseball and is therefore unAmerican and possibly Communist-inspired. There are lots of more or less unused reasons for being against college football. Sometimes it is a good idea to sum up and dispose of the trite and conventional points before going on to your own. This has the advantage of indicating to the reader that you are going to be neither trite nor conventional. Something like this: We are often told that college football should be abolished because it has become too commercial or because it is bad for the players. These arguments are no doubt very cogent, but they don't really go to the heart of the matter. Then you go to the heart of the matter.

Take the Less Usual Side

One rather simple way of getting into your paper is to take the side of the argument that most of the citizens will want to avoid. If the assignment is an essay on dogs, you can, if you choose, explain that dogs are faithful and lovable companions, intelligent, useful as guardians of the house and protectors of children, indispensable in police work — in short, when all is said and done, man's best friends. Or you can suggest that those big brown eyes conceal, more often than not, a vacuity of mind and an inconstancy of purpose; that the dogs you have known most intimately have been mangy, ill-tempered brutes, incapable of instruction; and that only your nobility of mind and fear of arrest prevent you from kicking the flea-ridden animals when you pass them on the street. Naturally personal convictions will sometimes dictate your approach. If the assigned subject is “Is Methodism Rewarding to the Individual?” and you are a pious Methodist, you have really no choice. But few assigned subjects, if any, will fall in this category. Most of them will lie in broad areas of discussion with much to be said on both sides. They are intellectual exercises, and it is legitimate to argue now one way and now another, as debaters do in similar circumstances. Always take the side that looks to you hardest, least defensible. It will almost always turn out to be easier to write interestingly on that side. This general advice applies where you have a choice of subjects. If you are to choose among “The Value of Fraternities” and “My Favorite High School Teacher” and “What I Think About Beetles,” by all means plump for the beetles. By the time the instructor gets to your paper, he will be up to his ears in tedious tales about a French teacher at Bloombury High and assertions about how fraternities build character and prepare one for life. Your views on beetles, whatever they are, are bound to be a refreshing change. Don't worry

too much about figuring out what the instructor thinks about the subject so that you can cuddle up with him. Chances are his views are no stronger than yours. If he does have convictions and you oppose him, his problem is to keep from grading you higher than you deserve in order to show he is not biased. This doesn't mean that you should always cantankerously dissent from what the instructor says; that gets tiresome too. And if the subject assigned is “My Pet Peeve,” do not begin, “My pet peeve is the English instructor who assigns papers on 'my pet peeve.”' This was still funny during the War of 1812, but it has sort of lost its edge since then. It is in general good manners to avoid personalities.

Slip Out of Abstraction

If you will study the essay on college football [near the beginning of this essay], you will perceive that one reason for its appalling dullness is that it never gets down to particulars. It is just a series of not very glittering generalities: “football is bad for the colleges,” “it has become too commercial,” “football is big business,” “it is bad for the players,” and so on. Such round phrases thudding against the reader's brain are unlikely to convince him, though they may well render him unconscious. If you want the reader to believe that college football is bad for the players, you have to do more than say so. You have to display the evil. Take your roommate, Alfred Simkins, the secondstring center. Picture poor old Alfy coming home from football practice every evening, bruised and aching, agonizingly tired, scarcely able to shovel the mashed potatoes into his mouth. Let us see him staggering up to the room, getting out his econ textbook, peering desperately at it with his good eye, falling asleep and failing the test in the morning. Let us share his unbearable tension as Saturday draws near. Will he fail, be demoted, lose his monthly allowance, be forced to return to the coal mines? And if he succeeds, what will be his reward? Perhaps a slight ripple of applause when the third--string center replaces him, a moment of elation in the locker room if the team wins, of despair if it loses. What will he look back on when he graduates from college? Toil and torn ligaments. And what will be his future? He is not good enough for pro football, and he is too obscure and weak in econ to succeed in stocks and bonds. College football is tearing the heart from Alfy Simkins and, when it finishes with him, will callously toss aside the shattered hulk. This is no doubt a weak enough argument for the abolition of college football, but it is a sight better than saying, in three or four variations, that college football (in your opinion) is bad for the players. Look at the work of any professional writer and notice how constantly he is moving from the generality, the abstract statement, to the concrete example, the facts and figures, the illustrations. If he is writing on juvenile delinquency, he does not just tell you that juveniles are (it seems to him) delinquent and that (in his opinion) something should be done about it. He shows you juveniles being delinquent, tearing up movie theatres in Buffalo, stabbing high school principals in Dallas, smoking marijuana in Palo Alto. And more than likely he is moving toward some specific remedy, not just a general wringing of the hands. It is no doubt possible to be too concrete, too illustrative or anecdotal, but few inexperienced writers err this way. For most the soundest advice is to be seeking always for the picture, to be always turning general remarks into seeable examples. Don't say, “Sororities teach girls the social graces.” Say, “Sorority life teaches a girl how to carry on a conversation while pouring tea, without sloshing the tea into the saucer.” Don't say, “I like certain kinds of popular music very much.” Say, “Whenever I hear Gerber Sprinklittle play 'Mississippi Man' on the trombone, my socks creep up my ankles.”

Get Rid of Obvious Padding

The student toiling away at his weekly English theme is too often tormented by a figure: five hundred words. How, he asks himself, is he to achieve this staggering total? Obviously by never using one word when he can somehow work in ten. He is therefore seldom content with a plain statement like “Fast driving is dangerous.” This has only four words in it. He takes thought, and the sentence becomes: In my opinion, fast driving is dangerous. Better, but he can do better still: In my opinion, fast driving would seem to be rather dangerous. If he is really adept, it may come out: In my humble opinion, though I do not claim to be an expert on this complicated subject, test driving, in most circumstances, would seem to be rather dangerous in many respects, or at least so it would seem to me. Thus four words have been turned into forty, and not an iota of content has been added. Now this is a way to go about reaching five hundred words, and if you are content with a “D” grade, it is as good a way as any. But if you aim higher, you must work differently. Instead of stuffing your sentences with straw, you must try steadily to get rid of the padding, to make your sentences lean and tough. If you are really working at it, your first draft will greatly exceed the required total, and then you will work it down, thus: It is thought in some quarters that fraternities do not contribute as much as might be expected to campus life. Some people think that fraternities contribute little to campus life. The average doctor who practices in small towns or in the country must toil night and day to heal the sick. Most country doctors work long hours. When I was a little girl, I suffered from shyness and embarrassment in the presence of others. I was a shy little girl. It is absolutely necessary for the person employed as a marine fireman to give the matter of steam pressure his undivided attention at all times. The fireman has to keep his eye on the steam gauge. You may ask how you can arrive at five hundred words at this rate. Simple. You dig up more real content. Instead of taking a couple of obvious points off the surface of the topic and then circling warily around them for six paragraphs, you work in and explore, figure out the details. You illustrate. You say that fast driving is dangerous, and then you prove it. How long does it take to stop a car at forty and at eighty? How far can you see at night? What happens when a tire blows? What happens in a head--

on collision at fifty miles an hour? Pretty soon your paper will be full of broken glass and blood and headless torsos, and reaching five hundred words will not really be a problem.



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Call a Fool a Fool

Some of the padding in freshman themes is to be blamed not on anxiety about the word minimum but on excessive timidity. The student writes, “In my opinion, the principal of my high school acted in ways that I believe every unbiased person would have to call foolish.” This isn't exactly what he means. What he means is, “My high school principal was a fool.” If he was a fool, call him a fool. Hedging the thing about with “inmyopinion's” and “itseemstome's” and “asIseeit's” and “atleastfrommypointofview's” gains you nothing. Delete these phrases whenever they creep into your paper. The student's tendency to hedge stems from a modesty that in other circumstances would be commendable. He is, he realizes, young and inexperienced, and he half suspects that he is dopey and fuzzy-minded beyond the average. Probably only too true. But it doesn't help to announce your incompetence six times in every paragraph. Decide what you want to say and say it as vigorously as possible, without apology and in plain words. Linguistic diffidence can take various forms. One is what we call euphemism. This is the tendency to call a spade “a certain garden implement” or women's underwear “unmentionables.” It is stronger in some eras than others and in some people than others but it always operates more or less in subjects that are touchy or taboo: death, sex, madness, and so on. Thus we shrink from saying “He died last night” but say instead “passed away,” “left us,” “joined his Maker,” “went to his reward.” Or we try to take off the tension with a lighter cliché: “kicked the bucket,” “cashed in his chips,” “handed in his dinner pail.” We have found all sorts of ways to avoid saying mad: “mentally ill,” “touched,” “not quite right upstairs,” “feebleminded,” “innocent,” “simple,” “off his trolley,” “not in his right mind.” Even such a now plain word as insane began as a euphemism with the meaning “not healthy.” Modern science, particularly psychology, contributes many polysyllables in which we can wrap our thoughts and blunt their force. To many writers there is no such thing as a bad schoolboy. Schoolboys are maladjusted or unoriented or misunderstood or in the need of guidance or lacking in continued success toward satisfactory integration of the personality as a social unit, but they are never bad. Psychology no doubt makes us better men and women, more sympathetic and tolerant, but it doesn't make writing any easier. Had Shakespeare been confronted with psychology, “To be or not to be” might have come out, “To continue as a social unit or not to do so. That is the personality problem. Whether 'tis a better sign of integration at the conscious level to display a psychic tolerance toward the maladjustments and repressions induced by one's lack of orientation in one's environment or — ” But Hamlet would never have finished the soliloquy. Writing in the modern world, you cannot altogether avoid modern jargon. Nor, in an effort to get away from euphemism, should you salt your paper with four-letter words. But you can do much if you will mount guard against those roundabout phrases, those echoing polysyllables that tend to slip into your writing to rob it of its crispness and force.

Beware of Pat Expressions

Other things being equal, avoid phrases like “other things being equal.” Those sentences that come to you whole, or in two or three doughy lumps, are sure to be bad sentences. They are no creation of yours but pieces of common thought floating in the community soup. Pat expressions are hard, often impossible, to avoid, because they come too easily to be noticed and seem too necessary to be dispensed with. No writer avoids them altogether, but good writers avoid them more often than poor writers. By “pat expressions” we mean such tags as “to all practical intents and purposes,” “the pure and simple truth,” “from where I sit,” “the time of his life,” “to the ends of the earth,” “in the twinkling of an eye,” “as sure as you're born,” “over my dead body,” “under cover of darkness,” “took the easy way out,” “when all is said and done,” “told him time and time again,” “parted the best of friends,” “stand up and be counted,” “gave him the best years of her life,” “worked her fingers to the bone.” Like other clichés, these expressions were once forceful. Now we should use them only when we can't possibly think of anything else. Some pat expressions stand like a wall between the writer and thought. Such a one is “the American way of life.” Many student writers feel that when they have said that

something accords with the American way of life or does not they have exhausted the subject. Actually, they have stopped at the highest level of abstraction. The American way of life is the complicated set of bonds between a hundred and eighty million ways. All of us know this when we think about it, but the tag phrase too often keeps us from thinking about it. So with many another phrase dear to the politician: “this great land of ours,” “the man in the street,” “our national heritage.” These may prove our patriotism or give a clue to our political beliefs, but otherwise they add nothing to the paper except words.



Figure: Image by Pixabay

Colorful Words

The writer builds with words, and no builder uses a raw material more slippery and elusive and treacherous. A writer's work is a constant struggle to get the right word in the right place, to find that particular word that will convey his meaning exactly, that will persuade the reader or soothe him or startle or amuse him. He never succeeds altogether — sometimes he feels that he scarcely succeeds at all — but such successes as he has are what make the thing worth doing. There is no book of rules for this game. One progresses through everlasting experiment on the basis of everwidening experience. There are few useful generalizations that one can make about words as words, but there are perhaps a few. Some words are what we call “colorful.” By this we mean that they are calculated to produce a picture or induce an emotion. They are dressy instead of plain, specific instead of general, loud instead of soft. Thus, in place of “Her heart beat,” we may write, “her heart pounded, throbbed, fluttered, danced.” Instead of “He sat in his chair,” we may say, “he lounged, sprawled, coiled.” Instead of “It was hot,” we may say, “It was blistering, sultry, muggy, suffocating, steamy, wilting.” However, it should not be supposed that the fancy word is always better. Often it is as well to write “Her heart beat” or “It was hot” if that is all it did or all it was. Ages differ in how they like their prose. The nineteenth century liked it rich and smoky. The twentieth has usually preferred it lean and cool. The twentieth century writer, like all writers, is forever seeking the exact word, but he is wary of sounding feverish. He tends to pitch it low, to understate it, to throw it away. He knows that if he gets too colorful, the audience is likely to giggle. See how this strikes you: “As the rich, golden glow of the sunset died away along the eternal western hills, Angela's limpid blue eyes looked softly and trustingly into Montague's flashing brown ones, and her heart pounded like a drum in time with the joyous song surging in her soul.” Some people like that sort of thing, but most modern readers would say, “Good grief,” and turn on the television.

Colored Words

Some words we would call not so much colorful as colored — that is, loaded with associations, good or bad. All words — except perhaps structure words — have associations of some sort. We have said that the meaning of a word is the sum of the contexts in which it occurs. When we hear a word, we hear with it an echo of all the situations in which we have heard it before. In some words, these echoes are obvious and discussible. The word mother, for example, has, for most people, agreeable associations. When you hear mother you probably think of home, safety, love, food, and various other pleasant things. If one writes, “She was like a mother to me,” he gets an effect which he would not get in “She was like an aunt to me.” The advertiser makes use of the associations of mother by working it in when he talks about his product. The politician works it in when he talks about himself. So also with such words as home, liberty, fireside, contentment, patriot, tenderness, sacrifice, childlike, manly, bluff, limpid. All of these words are loaded with associations that would be rather hard to indicate in a straightforward definition. There is more than a literal difference between “They sat around the fireside” and “They sat around the stove.” They might have been equally warm and happy around the stove, but fireside suggests leisure, grace, quiet tradition, congenial company, and stove does not. Conversely, some words have bad associations. Mother suggests pleasant things, but mother-in-law does not. Many mothers-in-law are heroically lovable and some mothers drink gin all day and beat their children insensible, but these facts of life are beside the point. The point is that mother sounds good and mother-in-law does not. Or consider the word intellectual. This would seem to be a complimentary term, but in point of fact it is not, for it has picked up associations of impracticality and ineffectuality and general

dopiness. So also such words as liberal, reactionary, Communist, socialist, capitalist, radical, schoolteacher, truck driver; operator, salesman, huckster, speculator. These convey meaning on the literal level, but beyond that — sometimes, in some places — they convey contempt on the part of the speaker. The question of whether to use loaded words or not depends on what is being written. The scientist, the scholar, try to avoid them; for the poet, the advertising writer, the public speaker, they are standard equipment. But every writer should take care that they do not substitute for thought. If you write, “Anyone who thinks that is nothing but a Socialist (or Communist or capitalist)” you have said nothing except that you don't like people who think that, and such remarks are effective only with the most naive readers. It is always a bad mistake to think your readers more naive than they really are.

Colorless Words

But probably most student writers come to grief not with words that are colorful or those that are colored but with those that have no color at all. A pet example is nice, a word we would find it hard to dispense with in casual conversation but which is no longer capable of adding much to a description. Colorless words are those of such general meaning that in a particular sentence they mean nothing. Slang adjectives like cool (“That's real cool”) tend to explode all over the language. They are applied to everything, lose their original force, and quickly die. Beware also of nouns of very general meaning, like circumstances, cases, instances, aspects, factors, relationships, attitudes, eventualities, etc. In most circumstances you will find that those cases of writing which contain too many instances of words like these will in this and other aspects have factors leading to unsatisfactory relationships with the reader resulting in unfavorable attitudes on his part and perhaps other eventualities, like a grade of “D.” Notice also what etc. means. It means “I'd like to make this list longer, but I can't think of any more examples.”

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8.7: Key Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the end stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- When revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing and proofreading, you take a second (and maybe third) look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.
- Cohesion in writing means that the writer's wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs; transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more cohesive.
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words, and effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer's responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.
- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.
- Deal with higher order concerns (changes in content in organization) before dealing with lower order concerns, such as word choice and sentence structure.
- Along with getting feedback from others, reverse outlining is a good way to check your draft to see if any higher order concern changes need to be made.
- Be sure to proofread your work (for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting) using one of the proofreading techniques before turning in your paper.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Clarity, Conciseness, and Style

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9.1: Academic Style



Figure: Image from Pixabay

Academic Style

Many students enter their first year college reading-writing course thinking that academic style means using "big words," never using I, and making their sentences as long as possible. Student may have read academic readings in which the style sounded "overblown" or wordy. A lot of academic writing exists that does read this way, but such writing is not necessarily *good* academic writing. Some writers come into college already writing in what they feel is academic writing style, and others don't know how to write in that way, but think that is the goal.

In reality, academic style involves using clear, specific word choice and sentence constructions (including active voice as much as possible); staying focused on the topic at hand; generally using third person voice to build your argument and incorporate your sources; and generally avoiding personal experience or discussing your process of writing the paper. Some of these parts of academic style are discussed elsewhere in this e-book (see "Word Choice"). Here, we will focus on some of the sentence level conventions that academic style involves.

Example of Good Academic Style

The following example by Professor Peter Bowler from publicdomainreview.org demonstrates good academic style in humanities writing:

> H. G. Wells worried constantly about the future of humanity. While he hoped for progress in human affairs, he was only too well aware that it was not inevitable and might not be sustained. Throughout his career he celebrated the technological developments that were revolutionizing life but feared they might lead to eventual degeneration or, as came to pass in 1914, a catastrophic war. He was also aware that there were disagreements over what would actually count as progress. Providing everyone with the benefits of modern industry might not be enough, especially as continued technological innovation would require the constant remodeling of society. Progressive steps introducing entirely new functions were episodic, open-ended and unpredictable, in both biological and social evolution. These uncertainties were compounded by a realization that, where technological innovation was concerned, it was virtually impossible to predict future inventions or what their long-term consequences might be. Even if progress continued, it would be much more open-ended than advocates of the traditional idea of progress had imagined.
>
> For Wells the most basic level of uncertainty arose from the fear that the human race might not sustain its current rate of development. In his 1895 story “The Time Machine” he imagined his time traveler projected through eras of future progress: “I saw great and splendid architecture rising about me, more massive than any buildings of our time, and yet, as it seemed, built of glimmer and mist" (27). But the time traveler ends up in a world brought down by social division and degeneration. The brutal Morlocks are the descendants of the industrial workers, while the childlike Eloi are the remnants of the leisured upper classes. This prediction was based on his zoologist friend E. Ray Lankester’s extension of the Darwinian theory. Lankester argued that because evolution works by adapting populations to their environment, progress is not inevitable and any species that adapts itself to a less active and hence less challenging way of life will degenerate (Lankester 127 and 198-202). Here was the model for a more complex vision of progress in which any advance would depend on the circumstances of the time and could not be predicted on the basis of previous trends.

While a couple of uses of the passive voice are present (paragraph 1, sentence 7 and paragraph 2, sentence 4), the uses are acceptable because the author wanted to focus on the object of the sentences and needed them to cohere well with the previous

sentences. However, all of the other sentences are in active voice.

The paragraphs focus on the topic at hand and what others say about topic. The author uses many types of descriptive phrases and clauses, uses specific and meaningful word choice, and varies the sentence length depending on what he wants to empahsize. In addition, when writing about an event within a book, he uses simple present tense ("But the time traveler ends up in a world brought down by social division and degeneration.")

Some Academic Style Recommendations

What to Avoid

1. Avoid using "I" unless writing about personal experience or actively comparing your opinion to another author's.

Do not write: *I think greed is the principal cause of Americans' debt.*

Do write: Greed is the principal cause of Americans' debt.

(It will be clear that the opinion is yours simply by the fact that you are writing the paper. If the opinion is someone else's, say whose opinion it is. Otherwise, the focus will move from the topic you are writing about to you.)

2. Avoid "you" (or "your" or "yours") **unless you are seeking to address the reader directly.**

Do not write: *If you shop too much, you can become addicted.*

Do write: People who shop too much can become addicted.

Your audience is a general academic audience, and one's purpose in writing a paper is not generally to give personal advice. "You" addresses one person, but an academic essay's audience is multiple people.

3. Avoid (unanswered) questions, especially if they occur where you should be writing analysis.

Do not write: *How can children know how to resist advertising?*

Do write: Children do not have the maturity to resist advertising.

Just say what you mean to say because questions can prevent a writer from getting their point across with precision. It is occasionally acceptable to use a question as a hook or transition, but avoid using them more than once or twice in an essay.

4. Avoid using casual language or slang unless it contributes to the effect you want.

Do not write: *The author talks about how corporations pollute.*

Do write: The author explains that, without regulation, corporations pollute.

Do not write: The authors describe *this* family, the Joneses…

Do write: The authors describe a family, the Joneses… casual tone might undermine your authority.

A casual tone may undermine your authority and is not the usual accepted tone for academic writing.

5. Avoid sweeping, obvious, vague, or clichéd phrases and statements:

- Nowadays
- In today's society
- This proves that no one cares about anyone but himself.
- Everyone is addicted to shopping.
- Pollution affects everyone and everything.
- Pollution must end today or everyone will die soon.
- In society, many things happen that are connected to each other.

To correct these kinds of statements, refine your thinking and decide what specifically you mean – and can reasonably claim.

What to Do

1. Use simple present verb tense, rather than past tense, when writing about what you read.

Do not write: The author **wrote** about the need to reduce vaping among people of all ages.

Write: The author **writes** about the need to reduce vaping among people of all ages.

Using simple present tense is academic convention because of the idea that once something is written on paper (or recorded on film or video), it always exists and lives in an "eternal present."

2. Vary your sentence length.

Review the example at the top of the page and notice how having short sentences after long sentences helps to keep your attention and move you forward while you read.

3. Use strong, descriptive words -- especially verbs.

Avoid weak verbs that no longer have much meaning, such as "get," "have", "being," "make," and their variants. Also try to avoid verbs that have a preposition (but no prepositional phrase) after them.

Do not write: I **ate up** my food quickly.

Do write: I **gobbled** my food.

Depending on your meaning, the following table includes some stronger words for these notoriously weak verbs.

Get	Have (as a main verb)	Be(ing)	Make
obtain	possess	exist	cause
understand	keep	am	require
fetch	own	feel	produce
receive	contract (as a disease)	are	create

4. Write with focused sentence; this includes active voice.

- Use active voice wherever possible. The situations in which using passive voice is acceptable are when:
- A writer needs to begin with the object of the sentence so that the sentence flows well from the previous sentence (cohesion)
- A writer needs to describe a process they followed (such as might appear in the methodology section of a scientific research paper or lab report)
- The subject or agent of the sentence is unknown.Other guidelines for writing focused sentences can be found here.

The following videos can reinforce what you just read. While they refer to APA style, all of the tips here are relevant for MLA also.



Video 9.1.1



Video 9.1.1

Writing in an Academic Style Part 1 and 2. **Authored by:** JMU Writing Center. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Practice with Academic Style

Exercise 1

Rewrite these sentences in a clear, academic style using the above guidelines.

1. You will never be happy if you don't spend time with your friends and family.
2. How can communities regulate corporations without the help of the government?
3. In my opinion, I think that people nowadays are materialistic.
4. There was this guy who was talking in this book called *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* – I think his name was Arne – saying that women only entered the workforce in the 70s because men were deadbeat earners.
5. Who do you think will make you happy if not yourself?
6. There are all these advertisements that try to get kids to buy things.
7. I believe that advertising damages women.
8. The authors of "Iron Maiden" say that you will have lower self-esteem if you read too many fashion magazines.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph in a clear, academic style using the above guidelines.

Food stamps have recently been proposed to be restricted by the U.S. government. To write this paper, I examine five sources that discussed the topic of food stamps. All of the sources look at the topic of food stamps from the federal level, rather than from the perspective of a particular state. Almost all of the sources acknowledge that some people will no longer receive food stamps. In fact, only those with great need could receive help! Food banks will all be inundated with new people who need help, or children will go hungry. And hungry children don't learn as well as those who have had a good breakfast. Food stamps should not be restricted to only the most needy because, in our gig-based economy, many people go hungry some of the time. It's just offloading the problem onto the private sector.

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9.2: Punctuation and Style

Parentheses, Dashes, and Hyphens

The following video explains how to work with parentheses and dashes.



Video 9.2.1

Parentheses and Dashes. **Authored by:** Warner JordanEducation. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete the parentheses and any text within them. Words in parentheses can also indicate thoughts that writers are thinking to themselves when writing dialog. They can also be used to distinguish asides that are less important to the meaning of a sentence than descriptive words surrounded by commas might be.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen **(**so far**)**.

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious **(**and nutritious**)** foods I have ever tasted!

? Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentence by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash if the part of the sentence that is set off also ends the sentence. To create a dash in Microsoft Word or Google

Docs, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

? Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work of the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words (usually adjectives) that work together to form a single description.

The fifty–five–year–old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as her younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit–forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the mid–year review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet–

ing would conflict with the client meeting.



Figure: Unsplash

Note of Caution: Phrases set apart with parentheses or dashes interrupt the flow of the sentence. Use them sparingly, and be careful not to interrupt yourself to much with such asides. It can make your writing harder to read. However, they can also add style by allowing your voice to shine through by creating pacing and emphasis.

? Exercise 3

Using what you learned in this chapter, correct the punctuation errors and fix the style in the following sentences.

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.

b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

c. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.

d. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

e. The groom danced with his new mother in law.

f. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

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9.3: Capitalization

Capitalization

The following are some capitalization rules. You probably know most of them, but it's very possible you may be unclear on a couple of them.

- Always capitalize the first letter of a sentence. This gives a visual signal to your reader that a new idea is beginning.
- Always capitalize "I" when referring to yourself. Don't fall into the texting lowercase "i" habit.
- Always capitalize proper nouns. This may be a little trickier than you think. See this video for some tips.

The following video will tell you more.

Free English Lesson -- Capitalization and Proper Nouns. **Authored by:** The Nardvark. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.



Video 9.3.1

Capitalize	Don't Capitalize
• Names of people • A particular river or mountain • Brands • Company/organization names • Days of the week • Months of the year • Street and square names • Departments of the government • Historical eras • Holidays • Institutions • Man-made structures • Geographical and geopolitical locations (countries, counties, etc.) • Landmarks • Planets when referred to as their name • Races, nationalities and tribes • Religions and names of deities • Books that are the basis of a religion • Special events and occasions • The genus of an organism	• Types of animals, unless it's named after a person or a place • Just the words river or mountain • Elements off the periodic table of elements (no exceptions) • Types of companies • Food, unless it's a brand name or has someone's name in it • Medical conditions, unless they are named after someone • Plants, vegetables, and fruits unless they are named after someone (and only capitalize the name) • Use of department and other generic terms without titles • Chemicals and minerals • Seasons and times of day • Heavenly bodies that aren't planets • The species of an organism

Note:

Capitalize adjectives when the adjective pertains to "X," and "X" is a proper noun. For instance, *French* refers to *France*, which is a proper noun. So *French* in *French fries* should be capitalized.

Writing at Work

When working with legal documents, capitalization rules differ from the standard. Defined terms may be capitalized throughout legal documents.

Exercise 1

Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

Capitalization of Titles (Title Case)

Capitalization of titles can be confusing because we see this done in different ways (styles) in different publication.

The traditional method of capitalizing a title involves:

- Capitalizing the first letter of the first and last words in a title.
- Capitalizing the first letter of all words that aren't articles or coordinating conjunctions that are less than five letters.

The following video illustrates this with particular examples.



Video 9.3.1

Capitalization Rules: Capitalization of a Title. **Authored by:** Union Test Prep. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Note:

Some style guides treat the title as a sentence and only capitalize the first word. This is not generally acceptable in college classes, however.

In particular, when you list the title on your Works Cited or Bibliography page, even if the original title used sentence case capitalization, change the capitalization to title case.

? Exercise 2

Capitalize the following titles according to standard title case.

1. the song remains the same
2. enter the wu-tang (36 chambers)
3. the dna drug revolution
4. the curious incident of the dog in the night time
5. so long, and thanks for all the fish
6. if life's a bowl of cherries, what am i doing in the pits?

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9.4: Commonly Confused Words

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. And builders must use the right part for the job. If they try to use nuts and bolts where nails or screws are needed to hold together a building, the building may fall apart during the first earthquake. Just as builders need to use the right hardware, writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use everyday as part of your writing and speaking vocabulary. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. This chapter covers word choice that will improve your writing.

Vocabulary and the Reading-Writing Connection

Adults gain most of their vocabulary simply by reading. The best way to improve your vocabulary is to read a wide variety of texts at the reading level you are at or slightly above. This will expose you to a wider range of words than you might be exposed to if you read the same sort of texts all the time. And such reading needn't just be academic in nature. Reading magazines about various hobbies, and with a variety of focuses (business, economics, fashion) will expose you to a wider vocabulary.

Some people complain that while they read a variety of different kinds of texts, they just can't retain the new words they meet. XXXXX

Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew.*

I liked her *new* sweater.

I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see Chapter 12.



Video 9.4.1

Commonly Misused & Confused Words -- Part 1. **Authored by:** Vocabulary TV. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and *knew* are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

- *A* (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant

  a key, **a** mouse, **a** screen

- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel sound

  an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo

- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words, phrases, or clauses together.

  peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.

  They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.

- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.

  We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change

  Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.

- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result

  The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

Are, Our

- My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.
- *Are* (linking verb). Use to create the right verb tense

We **are** thinking about going to the movies tonight.

- We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to

  My glasses are **by** the bed.

- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase

  I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Capital, Capitol

- *Capital* (adjective). Means upper case or excellent

That is a **capital** idea!

Proper nouns begin with **capital** letters.

- *Capitol* (noun). The place where government is headquartered.

Sacramento is the **capitol** of California.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession

The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- **It’s** the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge

  I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

- *No*. Used to make a negative

  I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Lessen, Lesson

- *Lessen* (verb). Means to reduce

I will **lessen** the amount I spend on entertainment this month.

- *Lesson* (noun). Something that one is taught

The teacher taught the **lesson** about phonics to the kindergarteners.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached

  Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something

  She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.
- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something

  I **have** many friends to help me move.

- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs

  I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

Patience, Patients

- *Patience* (noun). To wait without complaining

The driver showed **patience** while following the slow truck in front of him.

- *Patients* (plural noun). More than one person at the doctor's office or in the hospital.

The **patients** did not have to wait to see the doctor.

Principal, Principle

- *Principal* (noun or adjective). The highest level position or the most important something.

The **principal** component of a cup of tea is water.

The **principal** of the high school hired a new vice principal.

- *Principle* (noun). A philosophical point or fundamental truth

She argued about the ethical **principle.**

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud

  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end

  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct

  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left

  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper

  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Sea, See

- *Sea* (noun). A body of water slightly smaller than an ocean; a portion of an ocean that is partly surrounded by land

They set sail from the Adriatic **Sea.**

- See (verb). To use the sense of the eyes

I **see** all the flowers in the garden!

Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down

  She **set** the mug on the saucer.

- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects

  All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

  I'll **sit** on the sofa while he brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest

  Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed

  She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time

  Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession

  The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.

- **They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place

  The dogs' bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

  There are more treats if the dogs behave.

Though, Tho

- *Tho* (not a word). This is shorthand but is not really a word.
- *Though* (subordinating conjuntion). Joins a less important idea to a more important idea

Though many people may disagree, I get excited before finals week.

Threw, Through

Till, Until

- *Till* (verb). Means to prepare soil for planting

The farmer **tilled** the soil before planting lettuce seed.

- *Until* (subordinating conjunction). Joins a clause that talks about something that happens before a certain time.

We can't go on vacation **until** we have turned in our work.

To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement

  Let’s go **to** the circus.

- *To* A word that completes an infinitive verb

  to play, **to** ride, **to** watch.

- *Two* is the number after one. It describes how many.

  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose

  We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.
- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

  He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Vain, Vein

- *Vain* (adjective, noun compliment). Conceited, stuck on one's self.

The vain people couldn't stop admiring themselves in the mirror.

- *Vein* (noun). A cavity in the body through which blood flows that is smaller than an artery by larger than a capillary.

The nurse had to find a vein in my arm in order to draw some blood.

- *Vein* (noun). A metaphoric usage meaning "along those lines."

I will continue in that vein when I take over the acting role.

Who’s, Whose

- **Who’s** the new student? **Who’s** met him?
- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession

  Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You’re

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession

  Your book bag is unzipped.

- **You’re** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Tip: If you know you tend to confuse certain words, search for those words (the way you normally spell them) using the "find" feature in your word processing program. Then check to see if you have used and spelled that word correctly in the context you have written.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

? Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _____(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and _____(than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any _____(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must _____(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _____(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _____(affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will _____(set, sit) down and _____(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____(are, our) changing, and _____(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

? Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homynym or frequently misspelled words.

1. Kevin asked me a serious question and _____ (than/then) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.
2. A hot compress will _____ (lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.
3. Ashley was not a graceful _____ (looser, loser) because she knocked her chair over and stormed off the basketball court.
4. (Accept, Except) _____ for A. J., we all had our tickets to the play.
5. I am _____ (threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.
6. I don't care _____ (who's, whose) coming to the party and _____ (who's, whose) not.
7. Crystal could _____ (sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.
8. The _____ (principal, principle) gave a long-winded speech about peer pressure.
9. Dr. Fox nearly lost her _____(patience, patients) with one of her _____ (patience, patients).

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. **Do not rely on spell check** for commonly confused words. These are all words, and because word processing programs don't really understand meaning, they won't catch words that are correctly spelled but are used incorrectly.
2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.
3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Writing at Work 9.4.1

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to*days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your manager and colleagues.

Exercise 3

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding or changing a word to the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Once you have found the errors, compare what you found with a classmate. If you disagree about any changes, bring up the question in class.

Exercise 4

Proofread the following paragraph and correct any commonly confused or misspelled words.

Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagent hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

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9.5: Word Choice

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some free writing exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words. The danger of being picky about your words as you draft (especially during your first draft) is that you may end up forgetting what you want to write while you search for that perfect word. This can cripple your writing process and create writer's block. One way to make sure that -- at some point in your writing process -- that you do choose the exact word that you mean is to place question marks "?" by the word you can't think of or that you think you might want to change, and then continue to draft. Once you are ready to edit your work at the sentence level (all of your content development and organization are complete) then you can search for question marks to find the places where you wanted to consider the word choice more carefully. Also, you may receive feedback from readers about word choice they find confusing or that you may want to re-consider.

Use the following strategies to help you with your word choice. Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries and thesauruses to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries and thesauruses.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceding information you can identify:

Definition

myth, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic**, **myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

Definition

precocious *adj*, *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

? Exercise 1

Choose the correct synonym.

a. lenient _____ (relaxed, callous)

b. abandon _____ (vacate, deceive)

c. berate _____ (criticize, encourage)

d. experienced _____ (callow, matured)

e. spiteful _____ (malevolent, mellow)

f. tame _____ (subdued, wild)

g. tasty _____ (savory, bland)

h. banal _____ (common, interesting)

i. contradict _____ (deny, revolt)

j. vain _____ (boastful, simple)

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word. Using a thesaurus can be difficult sometimes if one doesn't know the connotations of a word because you risk using a word in the wrong way. If you aren't sure whether you are using a word with the right connotation, look up the word in sentences on the internet and see how its used in context. You can also ask your instructor or a tutor but if you are not sure about the connotation of a word, do a little research to figure it out.

The three following words (scrawny, skinny, and lean) all describe someone who weighs less than average, but they all have different connotations.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh or meat, very thin or narrow.
- **Word used in a sentence: Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive or negative connotations of the word *skinny*.

Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a **lean** figure whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ. This video explains it more.



Video 9.5.1

Word Choice. **Authored by:** Prof Myhen. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 2

In each of the following word sets, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Hey guys, let' learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member, but with the purpose of this chapter, that seems odd, doesn't it? The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. The following table explains just a few of the common ones.

Slang Expressions	
Slang Word or Phrase	***Meaning***
check it out, check this out	look at, watch, examine
chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic	a person who loves, or is addicted to chocolate, work, or shopping
stuff	things
have some tea	gossip
crack up	to laugh uncontrollably
veg, kick it	relax and do nothing
dude, man	person, man
cool, hip, bad	good, fashionable
gross, nasty	disgusting
pig out	overeat
screw up	make a bad mistake
awesome	great, terrific
the shit	the best

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of "ums," "likes," "yeahs," and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context if formal or informal. Ultimately, this is part of the message that is a result of the rhetorical context in which you are writing or speaking (see "The Art of Rhetoric").

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing. It is also not appropriate to use profanity in academic writing, unless -- of course -- you are quoting a profane word from an assigned reading. However, when writing expository writing, another word will almost always fulfill the meaning and emphasis that a profane word may provide in other contexts.

✔ Writing at Work 9.5.1

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture desensitizes many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 4

Edit the business email by replacing any slang words with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact e if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family’s dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit’s end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, “Time sure does fly when you are having fun!”
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definition of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, newer English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more common idioms may be of some help.

Idioms	
Idiom	***Definition***
A blessing in disguise	A good thing you do not recognize as "good" at first
A piece of cake	Easy to do
Better late than never	It is better to do something late than not at all
Get over it	Recover from something (a perceived insult)
I have no idea	I don't know
Not a chance	It will definitely not happen
On pins and needles	Very nervous about something that is or may be happening
On top of the world	Feeling great
Pulling your leg	Making a joke by tricking you
The sky is the limit	The possibilities are endless

What if you come across an idiom you do not understand? Context clues that can help you. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher the meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom ay be explained immediately after its use.

- **Sentence:** I felt like I was sitting on *pins and needles*, **I was so nervous.**

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

- **Sentence:** The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

- **Sentence:** Chynna thought the 5k race would be a *piece of cake*, **but it turned out to be very difficult.**

Pay attention tot he signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occuring.

Using Specific Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, explained how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 6

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo’s essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Choose Strong, Descriptive Verbs

When used as main verbs, the following words are weak and almost meaningless: have, do, make, went/gone, and the "to be" verbs. Some of these verbs are just fine as linking verbs, but not as main verbs. Choose a more descriptive verb to replace these weak, almost meaningless verbs. This video will explain.



Video 9.5.1

Strong Verbs. **Authored by:** Curriculum Pathways. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 7

In this exercise, replace the weak verbs with stronger, more descriptive verbs. You may need to replace more than one weak verb in a sentence.

1. Bethany's mother made her do her homework before Bethany could go out to play.
2. Michael went to play video games with his buddy, Pat, at Pat's house.
3. Chris and Sam went to prom and then hung out with friends afterward. They didn't get home until 3 a.m.!
4. Donna was doing her best, but it was sometimes hard to keep up and balance work and school.
5. The three-year-old was being childish when throwing her sibling's toy across the rooom.

? Exercise 8

Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

Collaboration

Compare your changes with a classmate.

? Exercise 9

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an "easy task" or a "simple task" because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a "large city" or a "metropolis" because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

✓ Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

? Exercise 10

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon

2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. Table 4.3 “Common Antonyms” lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 - Common Antonyms

Word	Antonym		Word	Antonym
absence	presence		frequent	seldom
accept	refuse		harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate		horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage		imitation	genuine
ancient	modern		inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce		inferior	superior
artificial	natural		intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive		justice	injustice
borrow	lend		knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice		landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish		likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek		minority	majority
capable	incapable		miser	spendthrift
combine	separate		obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal		optimist	pessimist
common	rare		permanent	temporary
decrease	increase		plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite		private	public
despair	hope		prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage		qualified	unqualified
employer	employee		satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract		tame	wild

Word	Antonym		Word	Antonym
forget	remember		vacant	occupied

Tip

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

Exercise 11

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Contributors

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The page was last updated on June 8, 2020.

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9.6: Sentence Focus

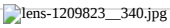


Figure: Image from Pixabay

Sentence Focus

Sentence focus means that the grammatical subject of your sentence is the same as the semantic subject. In other words, the meaning (semantics) subject matches the grammar. Sentences that aren't focused can be confusing because it's not clear who is doing what, and they tend to be overly wordy. If you need a refresher about how to identify the subject(s) and verb(s) in a sentence, see: "Verbs" and "Sentence Structure."

Here is an example of an overly wordy, unfocused sentence:

- In Smith's writing, there are many indications of their misunderstanding of natural selection.

A more focused version of this sentence, which says the same thing could read:

- Smith's argument indicates their misunderstanding of natural selection.

Notice: The focused sentence has eight words instead of thirteen, but the revision hasn't eliminated any meaning! The prepositional phrase didn't add anything to the point, but we need to keep (and begin with) the subject, Smith's argument. Therefore, we can omit "in" and "an." "There are" can be removed because we aren't talking about existence here.

You can avoid writing unfocused sentences by using active voice, using concrete subjects, using strong verbs, and keeping your subjects toward the beginning of the sentence and before the verb. Avoiding "there is/there are" can help keep sentences focused (unless you are writing about the existence of something). This is also true of "it is."

Use Active Voice

Use active voice when writing. However, passive voice can be acceptable when you want to keep the focus on what was done and not who did it. However, this should not be at the expense of clarity. In science writing, passive voice is generally expected in the methods section of research papers and in lab reports because the focus is on what's being done, not who is doing it. In other sections of research papers and most writing, however, use active voice if possible.

Passive voice occurs when the writer places the grammatical object in the subject position in a sentence. Therefore, the actual subject of the sentence is in the object position (at the end) or missing. In passive voice, the verb will be in past participle ("to be" + "ed" verb) form. Looking for this verb form is one of the easiest ways to tell if a sentence is in passive voice. In the following example, the subject (if there is one) is in bold and the past participle verb is underlined.

Examples: The frog *was dissected* by the **student**.

A solution *was added* to the beaker. (By whom?)

To identify passive voice, look for verbs that use a form of the "to be" ("was", "is" "being,") and a past tense verb (ends in "ed") after it. Then ask yourself whether this is an acceptable use of the passive.

Tip: The difference between past perfect tense and a past participle is that the subject is at the end of the sentence or nonexistent with a past participle. The subject will still be before the verb with the past perfect tense.

Writing at Work

At work, we commonly must ask people to do things, or we might need to make a recommendation. Sometimes, we may feel as though our tone is too direct if we use the active voice. In some work situations, the passive voice may seem more polite, and it may be acceptable to use the passive voice in some cases. However, even at work, most writing should be in active voice. Active voice implies responsibility and transparency; conversely, if passive voice is used when it isn't needed, it can appear that you are trying to hide something. Such situations have been captured by the phrase "mistakes were made," implying that no one takes responsibility for those mistakes and that the writer or speaker is dishonest.

A direct tone and active voice is also valued in American business life. Business cultures in other parts of the world may differ in their expectations about this, so if you plan to work for companies outside of the U.S. or for international companies within the U.S., research the acceptable style for making requests at your workplace.

? Exercise 1

Identify which sentences are in passive voice in the following sentences. The first couple of sentences have clues. The rest do not.

1. Measurements **were performed** on the wood timbers by a construction worker.
2. They **were satisfied** with the outcome of the discussion.
3. Removal of the mitochondria was achieved by the scientist.
4. Two samples were obtained from each brain.
5. Our results showed that the dogs were protected by the vaccine.

? Exercise 2

In each of the following sentences and on a separate piece of paper, a) decide if the sentence is active or passive; b) decide whether the use of the passive is acceptable and why or why not; and c) rewrite the sentence in active voice if the passive voice is not acceptable.

1. Marijuana caused an increase in apetite and a reduction in pain.
2. Ozone continued to be depleted because of aerosol spray use.
3. A mistake was made.
4. Mouse testing proceeded for the Phase B trials.
5. Group and individual activities were participated in by the class.
6. Documents should be submitted online by July 10.

Collaboration

Compare what you did with a classmate. If your answers or changes don't agree, bring it up in class.

Avoid "There Is/There Are" and "It Is" Most of the Time

“There is” is not necessary unless you are writing about the existence of something. “There is” tends to cloud writing because it shoves the real subject of the sentence farther down into the sentence. Choose the actual topic as the subject of your sentence and eliminate “there is.” You may need to change the verb and possibly a relative pronoun as well because of the changes in sentence structure that "there is" creates. Begin your core clause with the subject you are writing about. In the example sentences, below, the core sentence is in brackets. In the unfocused examples, the grammatical subject is in bold and the semantic (meaning) subject is in red. In the focused sentences, since the grammatical and semantic subjects are one in the same, they are just bold.

Unfocused sentence: In Malaysia, [**there are** large numbers of women in computer science], which is not perceived as a "masculine" field.

Focused sentence: In Malaysia, [**large numbers of women are** in computer science], which is not perceived as a "masculine" field.

“It is” can be written better most of the time; the phrase tends to be empty filler.

Unfocused sentence: It is with the utmost care that [I craft my sentences].

Focused sentenced: [**I craft** my sentences] with the utmost care.

? Exercise 3 9.6.1

In the following sentences, decide if "there is," "there are," or "it is" are talking about existence or giving extra emphasis to something. If not, rewrite the sentence.

1. There are three measures, and they all point to the idea that we need to be concerned about climate change.
2. It is with great pleasure that I introduce our guest speaker!
3. It is a lovely day.

4. There is a god.

5. After going to see the band play, there were some shady characters outside, so I decided to hang around awhile inside.

The subject and an object of a preposition cannot be the same word

The subject of a sentence cannot also be the object of a prepositional phrase. This problem commonly occurs when students introduce sources in their writing. In the following incorrect examples, the subject of the sentence (in brackets) appears in an introductory prepositional phrase (in blue). The corrected examples follow. Notice that in most cases, the introductory prepositional phrase disappears. (For more explanation of a prepositional phrase and subjects, see "Prepositional Phrases" and "Word Order and Sentence Structure").

Incorrect: Therefore, with [the lack of qualified teachers] will only cause unqualified students in the future.

Correct: Therefore, [the lack] of qualified teachers will only cause unqualified students in the future.

Incorrect: According to [Romeo, laments] "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Correct: [Romeo laments], "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Correct: According to popular culture, [Romeo's statement, "Parting is such sweet sorry," is] still a popular line.

Notice that the last example still begins wit a prepositional phrase, but the object of the preposition, "popular culture" is different from the subject of the sentence, "Romeo's statement."

Tip: Do not double your subject by saying the subject and a pronoun that stands for the subject right after it.

Incorrect: Emily Dickinson, she wrote a lot of poems, most of which were not read until after she died.

Correct: Emily Dickinson wrote a lot of poems, most of which were not read until after she died.

? Exercise 4

For this exercise, rewrite any sentence in which the subject is doubled up or the subject also appears as the object of the preposition in a prepositional phrase.

1. By "dogginess" means the qualities of following directions and providing love.

2. According to Brandeis, she states that "the prevalence of male tress in the landscape contributes to peoples' allergy problems."

3. In the article claims that gun violence can be reduced if gun responsibility becomes part of the training.

4. According to Jones, said that whether someone will become violent in a given situation depends on a combination of nature and nurture.

5. In doing this demonstrates her self-centeredness.

6. My tortoiseshell cat, she responds to music by moving her tail at different tempos.

? Exercise 5

Fix the sentence focus in the following sentences using the strategies practices on this page. Ask yourself: Who or what does what (to whom or what)? Then, use concrete subjects and active verbs.

1. Also, there is a need for more current curricula, and also a need for more teachers.

2. If the education system is funded equally and provided with proper materials might just fix the gap.

3. Although the interplay among economic factors is important, it is often the availability of affordable childcare that determines whether a parent returns to the work force.

4. The boiling water is drained in the colander, the pasta shook dry, and the sauce drizzled on it.

5. People argue about whether there are ghosts.

6. Before my dog was washed, we went to the beach.

7. By disentangling words will create a more concise sentence.

8. After having her bath, there was a dog park she wanted to go to.

9. Sniffing everything, my dog she dawdles while she walks.

10. It is taking us forever to go a few blocks because there are fire hydrants to sniff and barking dogs to respond to, and at the end is pooped out.

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9.7: Coordination and Subordination

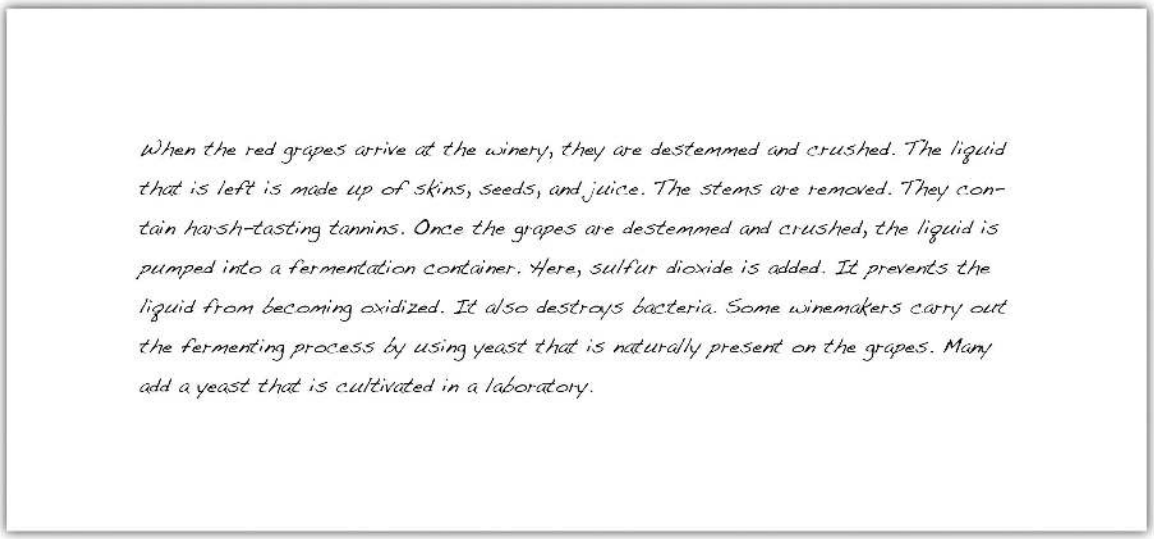
Writers use three major methods of joining their ideas together in one sentence: coordination and subordination. Learning use coordination and subordination well is foundational to creating cohesion (or a smooth flow) in your writing, as well as to express how your ideas relate to each other logically.

Definitions

Coordination: Joining two related ideas of equal importance

Subordination: Joining two related ideas of unequal importance

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. In this section, you will read excerpts from an essay by Noemi, who drafted an essay about wine production, as she revises her writing for coordination and subordination. Read this excerpt from Noemi's essay.



When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Figure: Noemi's first draft feels a little choppy and disconnected because we don't know if some ideas are more important than others or how the ideas relate to each other logically. To begin her revision process, she started looking at coordinating ideas of equal importance.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck*; *I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. These can be memorized by the acronym FANBOYS. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses but not when joining a phrase (such as in this sentence).

The following table explains the logic that each coordinating conjunction represents.

Function/Logic	Coordinating Conjunction	Example

cause	for	I had to bring my car to the body shop, for I had run into a pole.
addition	and	I strive to find balance in my life and my best friend tries to find balance also.
choice/alternative (negative)	nor	I have never been to Europe, nor have I been to Australia.
contrast	but	She had packed all her bags for vacation, but the flight was late.
choice/alternative	or	Next summer, I can either take a longer RV trip, or I can travel for a shorter period of time and take a train somewhere.
contrast	yet	I had tied a scarf around my luggage to find it at the baggage carousel, yet I couldn't find my bag when I disembarked the plane.
effect	so	I had packed almost everything in there, so I felt distraught.

The next table gives an example for how you might join two clauses with each type of coordinating conjunction.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (adds another ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn’t going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won’t be there either.	Jessie isn’t going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there*.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don’t think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don’t think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates contrast)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

* When using nor, you must change the sentence structure of the second clause you are joining. Notice that when joining the following two clauses with "nor," the subject and the linking verb in the second clause are switched around and the negative "not" is removed because the negative is conveyed through "nor."

Original: I **did not go** shopping this weekend. **I did not watch** any sports on TV.

Combined: I **did not go** shopping this weekend, *nor* **did I watch** any sports on TV.



Video 9.7.1

The Coordinating Conjunctions Song (FANBOYS). **Provided by:** Anchor Creative. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Exercise 1

Join the following sentence pairs with the coordinating conjunction that you feel reflects the logic that holds the two ideas together.

1. Ray likes EDM. Kelvin likes rap.
2. The book has been on the bestseller list for months it's one of the most boring novels I have ever read.
3. In an earthquake, buildings sway back and forth, many rattle and groan.
4. My living room is very small, I should not buy any more furniture.
5. Dedicated ecologists do not kill wildlife they shoot with cameras instead of guns.
6. Jane is my best friend, she is always there for me when I need her.
7. She is not only an excellent student, she is also and outstanding athlete.
8. John and Mike enjoyed the movies they wished the seats had been more cozy.
9. The TV wasn't working, I walked over to a friend's house to watch the game.
10. The telephone was ringing, someone was knocking at the front door as well.
11. I like action movies, he likes comedies.
12. I missed the 8 am bus, I slept through my alarm.
13. Something was obviously wrong with the meatloaf, it was glowing in the dark.
14. Harry was a good musician he could never keep a steady job in a band.
15. Mark is not very interested in sports, he does however, like to water ski.
16. I was happy with my new apartment it was in a good location and the rent was low.

Exercise 2

Fix the coordinating conjunction punctuation where needed in the following sentences. Remember that coordinating conjunctions that join two complete ideas (clauses) must have a comma before them. Coordinating conjunctions that join a phrase (part of a sentence) to another sentence structure do not need a comma before them.

1. He was amazed by the selection of items he could find when shopping online yet he had a hard time picturing how clothes would look on him.
2. Beth was horrified, but fascinated by the effects of consumer culture on people.
3. He was fearful of COVID-19 but he still went out and protested as he felt it was more important.

4. Pandemics are more likely to happen because of global warming, and increasing pressure on wild animals.
5. Change can happen when people of all races, and creeds stop treating each other in ways they wouldn't treat themselves.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. The punctuation of a conjunctive adverb varies depending upon where in the sentence the adverb appears. Once joined, the following sentences show cause and effect.

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, similarly, likewise	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Contrast	instead, however, otherwise	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, thus, therefore	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then, after	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.
Condition	otherwise	The hotel room will hopefully be ready when I arrive; otherwise, I will have to leave my luggage in the car.
Choice/Alternative	alternatively, on the other hand, conversely	I can continue with my current job and try to make it a better situation; alternatively, I can quit and try to find a new position.

Take a look at Noemi's essay on wine production and identify some areas in which he might use coordination.

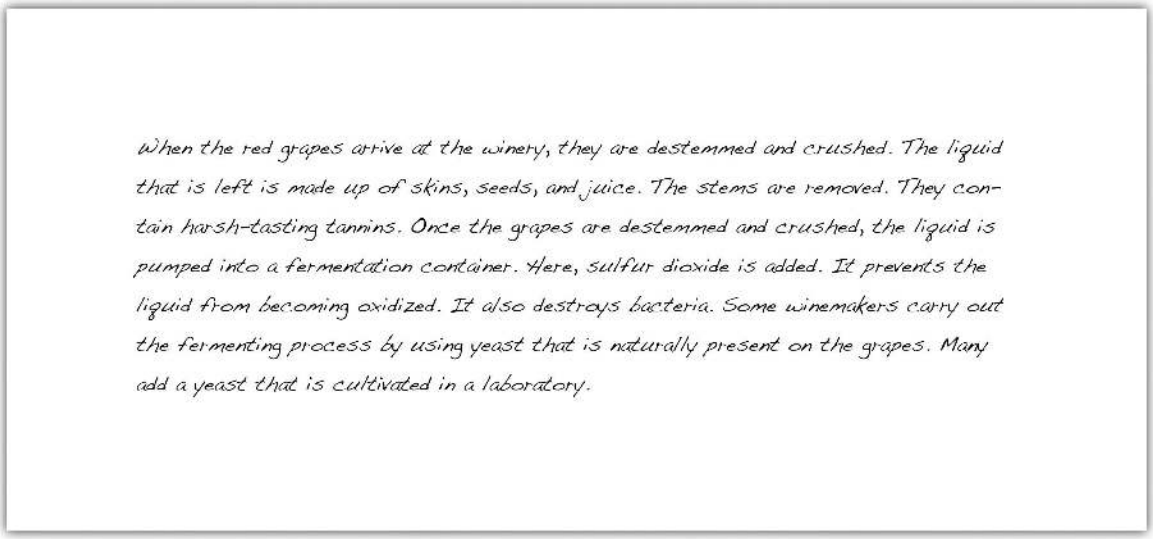


Figure: Now look at Noemi's revised essay. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

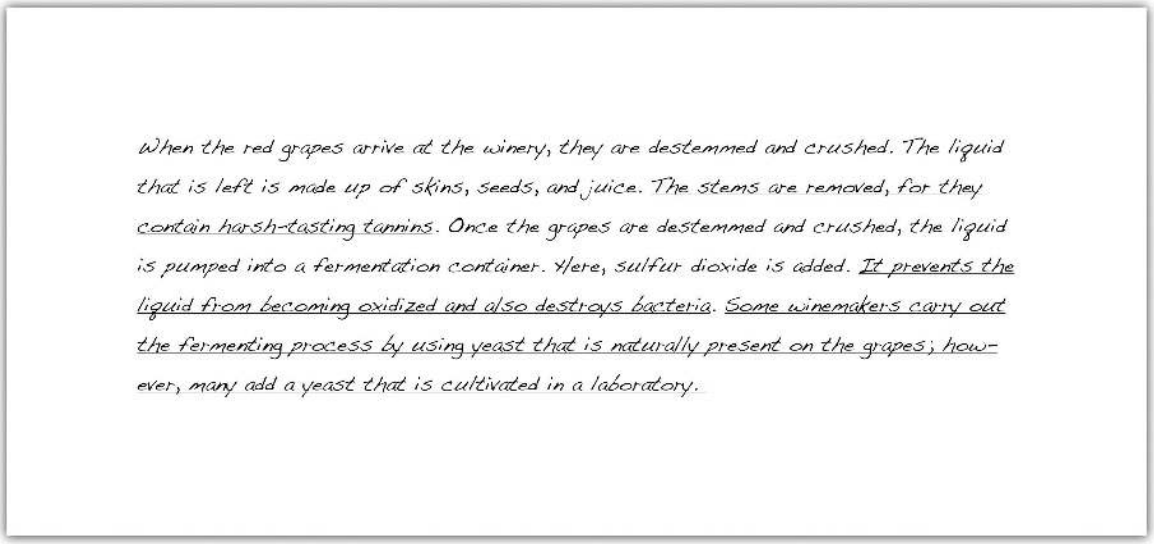


Figure: Tip: Punctuating Transitional Adverbs

Transitional adverbs can be tricky to punctuate. If the transitional adverb is used between the two clauses, place a semi-colon before the transitional adverb and a comma after, such as in the following sentence:

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break; however, they had to finish finals first.

If the transitional adverb appears in the middle of the second clause of the sentence (it should never appear in the first), it should be punctuated with commas on both sides, as in the following sentence.

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break. They, however, had to finish finals first.

Finally, if the transitional adverb appears at the end of the second clause, it should be punctuated with a comma before and a period after (the end of the sentence).

- They were looking forward to going home for the semester break. They had to finish finals first, however.

? Exercise 3

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.

3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

When writing an essay or a report, it is important that you do not use excessive coordination. Workplace documents should be clear and concise, so only join two clauses that are logically connected and can work together to make one main point. If you repeat the same coordinating conjunction several times in a sentence, you are probably including too many ideas. This may make it difficult for readers to pick out the most important information in each sentence.

Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). Unlike coordination, which allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

Tip: Subordination Punctuation

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma between the two clauses. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is needed.



Video 9.7.1

The Subordinating Conjunctions Song. **Provided by:** Anchor Creative. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in San Jose where she has several important client meetings.
Cause	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt from Noemi's essay and identify some areas in which she might use subordination.

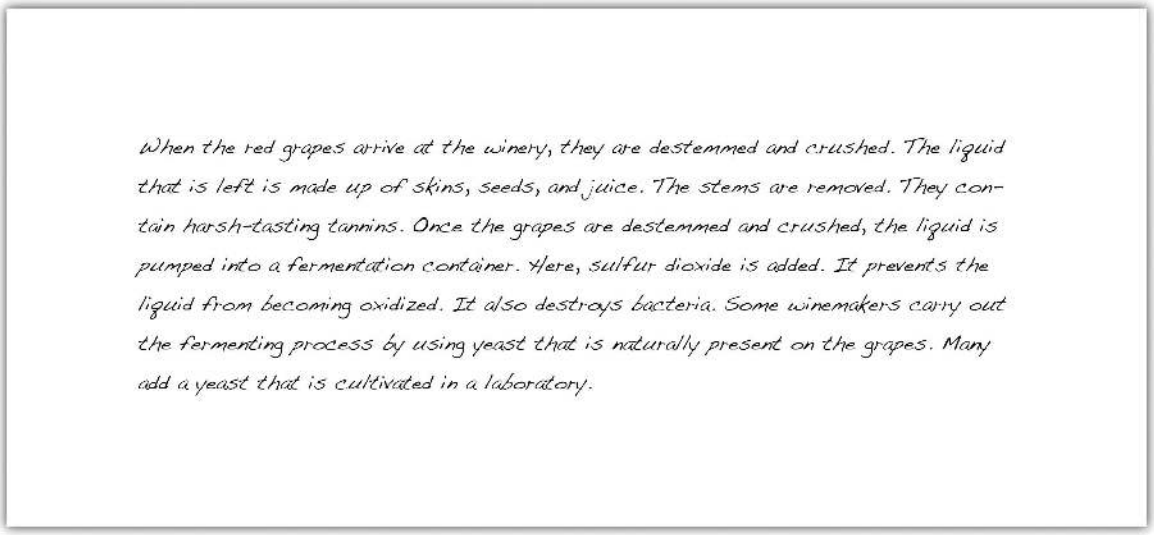

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Figure: Now look at Noemi's revised essay and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. Because the stems contain harsh-tasting tannins, they are removed. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added in order to prevent the liquid from becoming oxidized. Sulfur dioxide also destroys bacteria. Although some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

? Exercise 4

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Check your revised sentences for correct punctuation.

1. Jake is going to Mexico. There are beautiful beaches there.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the East Coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
4. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Jordan marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

? Exercise 5

Copy the paragraph from Joshua's essay onto your own sheet of paper. Then edit using the techniques you have learned in this section. Join the underlined sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature. Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration. Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing. Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

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9.8: Appositives, Adjective Clauses, Verbals

Appositives

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

- The lineman sacked the quarter back. The lineman was burly at 6 foot 5 and 275 pounds.
- The lineman, a burly man at 6 foot 5 and 275 pounds, sacked the quarterback.

To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers.

Appositive after Noun:	**Appositive before Noun:**
Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.	A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike adjective clauses and participial phrases, which may be restrictive or nonrestrictive, appositives are always nonrestrictive, and thus they are always set off by commas. A comma is placed both before and after the appositive. This video explains about appositives a little more.

Appositives -- 2 Minute Teacher. **Provided by:** Cody Walker. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.



Video 9.8.1

? Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using any of the techniques you have learned in this section:

- Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways
- The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
- Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
- Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
- Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Adjective Clauses (also known as Relative Clauses)

Here is a brief review of adjective clauses and relative pronouns.

An **adjective clause** is used to **describe** a **noun**:

The car, **which was red**, belonged to Young-Hee.

A **relative pronoun** is usually used to **introduce** an **adjective clause**:

Young-Hee, **who** is a Korean student, lives in Victoria.

For more information about relative clauses (adjective clauses) please see Section 11.12.

The main relative pronouns are:

Pronoun	Use	Example
Who	used for **humans** in the **subject** position	Hans, **who** is an architect, lives in Berlin.
Whom	used for **humans** in the **object** position	Marike, **whom** Hans knows well, is an interior decorator.
Which	used for **things** and **animals** in the **subject** or **object** position	Marike has a dog **which** follows her everywhere.
That	used for **humans**, **animals** and **things**, in the **subject** or **object** position (but see below)	Marike is decorating a house **that** Hans designed.
Whose	used for **humans**, **animals** and **things** in the **subject** or **object** position to show possession	Marike, **whose** dog follows her everywhere, is an animal lover.

There are two main kinds of adjective clause:

1. Non-defining clauses

Non-defining clauses give **extra information** about the noun, but they are not essential:

The desk in the corner, **which is covered in books**, is mine.

Explanation: We don't need this information in order to understand the sentence. “The desk in the corner is mine” is a good sentence on its own — we still know which desk is referred to. Note that non-defining clauses are usually separated by commas, and “**that**” is not usually used in this kind of context.

2. Defining clauses

Defining clauses give **essential information** about the noun:

The package **that arrived this morning** is on the desk.

Explanation: We need this information in order to understand the sentence. Without the relative clause, we don't know which package is being referred to. Note that “**that**” is often used in defining relative clauses, and they are not separated by commas.

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with the exercises here.

Verbals/ Gerunds

Here is a brief review of gerunds and how to form them.

Gerunds are **nouns formed from verbs**.

walking, talking, thinking, listening

Gerunds are **formed by adding ING to verbs**.

think + ing = thinking

Spelling Rules

There are a few spelling rules that you need to know in order to form gerunds correctly. The spelling of a gerund depends on the **vowels** (a, e, i, o, u) and **consonants** (b, c, d, f, etc.) at the end of the verb.

Rule	Example

Rule	Example
If there is **more than one consonant**, just **add ING**	thi**nk** + ing = think**ing**
If there is **more than one vowel**, just **add ING**	b**ea**t + ing = beat**ing**
If there is **one vowel** and **one consonant**, and the **syllable is stressed**, **double the consonant and add ING**	h**it** + t + ing = hitt**ing**
If there are **one or more consonants** and **E**, **remove the E and add ING**	ta**ke** + ing = tak**ing**
In **most other cases**, just **add ING**	study + ing = study**ing** see + ing = see**ing**

When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with the exercises here.

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9.9: Active vs. Passive Voice

Active and Passive Voice

Voice is a nebulous term in writing. It can refer to the general "feel" of the writing, or it can be used in a more technical sense. In this section, we will focus on the latter sense as we discuss active and passive voice.

You've probably heard of the passive voice—perhaps in a comment from an English teacher or in the grammar checker of a word processor. In both of these instances, you were (likely) guided away from the passive voice. Why is this the case? Why is the passive voice so hated? After all, it's been used twice on this page already (three times now). When the passive voice is used to frequently, it can make your writing seem flat and drab. However, there are some instances where the passive voice is a better choice than the active.

So just what is the difference between these two voices? In the simplest terms, an active voice sentence is written in the form of "A does B." (For example, "Carmen sings the song.") A passive voice sentence is written in the form of "B is done by A." (For example, "The song is sung by Carmen.") Both constructions are grammatically sound and correct.

Let's look at a couple more examples of the passive voice:

- I've been hit! (*or*, I have been hit!)
- Jasper was thrown from the car when it was struck from behind.

You may have noticed something unique about the previous two sentences: the subject of the sentence is not the person (or thing) performing the action. The passive voice "hides" who does the action. Despite these sentences being completely grammatically sound, we don't know who hit "me" or what struck the car.

The passive is created using the verb *to be* (e.g., the song **is** sung; it **was** struck from behind). Remember that *to be* conjugates irregularly. Its forms include *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, and *will be*, which we learned about earlier in the course.

Remember, *to be* also has more complex forms like *had been*, *is being*, and *was being.*

- Mirella **is being** pulled away from everything she loves.
- Pietro **had been** pushed; I knew it.
- Unfortunately, my car **was being** towed away by the time I got to it.

Because *to be* has other uses than just creating the passive voice, we need to be careful when we identify passive sentences. It's easy to mistake a sentence like "She was falling." or "He is short." for a passive sentence. However, in "She was falling," *was* simply indicates that the sentence takes place in the past. In "He is short," *is* is a linking verb. If there is no "real" action taking place, *is* is simply acting as a linking verb.

There are two key features that will help you identify a passive sentence:

- Something is happening (the sentence has a verb that is not a linking verb).
- The subject of the sentence is not doing that thing.



Video 9.9.1

Active vs Passive Voice in Your Writing. **Provided by:** GCFLearnFree.org. **License:** *All Rights Reserved*. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Usage

As you read at the two sentences below, think about the how the different voice may affect the meaning or implications of the sentence:

- **Passive voice:** The rate of evaporation is controlled by the size of an opening.
- **Active voice:** The size of an opening controls the rate of evaporation.

The passive choice slightly emphasizes "the rate of evaporation," while the active choice emphasizes "the size of an opening." Simple. So why all the fuss? Because passive constructions can produce grammatically tangled sentences such as this:

Groundwater flow is influenced by zones of fracture concentration, as can be recognized by the two model simulations (see Figures 1 and 2), by which one can see . . .

The sentence is becoming a burden for the reader, and probably for the writer too. As often happens, the passive voice here has smothered potential verbs and kicked off a runaway train of prepositions. But the reader's task gets much easier in the revised version below:

Two model simulations (Figures 1 and 2) illustrate how zones of fracture concentration influence groundwater flow. These simulations show . . .

To revise the above, all I did was look for the two buried things (simulations and zones) in the original version that could actually *do* something, and I made the sentence clearly about these two nouns by placing them in front of active verbs. This is the general principle to follow as you compose in the active voice: Place concrete nouns that can perform work in front of active verbs.

? Exercise 1

Are the following sentences in the active or passive voice?

1. Jayden drank more sodas than anyone else at the party.
2. The samples were prepared in a clean room before being sent out for further examination.
3. Karen was dancing with Joshua when she suddenly realized she needed to leave.
4. Carlos was a very serious scientist with unique interests.
5. When I returned to my room, my luggage had been stolen.

Show Answer

Answer

This sentence uses the active voice. **Jayden** does the action (**drank**) to the object (**more sodas**). If this sentence were written in the passive it would read "More sodas were drunk by Jayden than by anyone else at the party." This sentence uses the passive voice. The action (**prepared**) was done to the subject of the sentence (**samples**). If this sentence were written in the active it would be something like this: "[Actor] prepared the samples in a clean room before sending them out for further examination." Since we do not know who prepared the samples, the active sentence is incomplete. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* indicates that the sentence happened in the past; it does not indicate the passive voice in this instance. This sentence uses the active voice. In this case *was* is acting as a linking verb. It links **Carlos** with the phrase *very serious scientist*. The introductory phrase to the sentence (When I returned to my room) is in the active voice. The second phrase (my luggage had been stolen) uses the passive voice.

Revising Weak Passive-Voice Sentences

As we've mentioned, the passive voice can be a shifty operator—it can cover up its source, that is, who's doing the acting, as this example shows:

- **Passive:** The papers **will be graded** according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.
  - *Graded by whom though?*
- **Active: The teacher** will grade the papers according to the criteria stated in the syllabus.

It's this ability to cover the actor or agent of the sentence that makes the passive voice a favorite of people in authority—policemen, city officials, and, yes, teachers. At any rate, you can see how the passive voice can cause wordiness, indirectness, and comprehension problems.

Passive	Question	Active

Passive	Question	Active
Your figures **have been reanalyzed** in order to determine the coefficient of error. The results **will be announced** when the situation is judged appropriate.	Who analyzes, and who will announce?	**We** have reanalyzed your figures in order to determine the range of error. **We** will announce the results when the time is right.
With the price of housing at such inflated levels, those loans **cannot be paid** off in any shorter period of time.	Who can't pay the loans off?	With the price of housing at such inflated levels, **homeowners** cannot pay off those loans in any shorter period of time.
After the arm of the hand-held stapler **is pushed** down, the blade from the magazine **is raised by** the top-leaf spring, and the magazine and base.	Who pushes it down, and who or what raises it?	After **you** push down on the arm of the hand-held stapler, **the top-leaf spring** raises the blade from the magazine, and the magazine and base move apart.
However, market share **is being lost by** 5.25-inch diskettes as is shown in the graph in Figure 2.	Who or what is losing market share, who or what shows it?	However, **5.25-inch diskettes** are losing market share as the graph in **Figure 2** shows.
For many years, federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping **have been ignored**. Only recently **have** tighter restrictions **been imposed** on the circumstances that warrant it.	Who has ignored the regulations, and who is now imposing them?	For many years, **government officials** have ignored federal regulations concerning the use of wire-tapping. Only recently has **the federal government** imposed tighter restrictions on the circumstances that warrant it.

? Exercise 2

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice. Why is the active voice a better choice for each of these sentences?

1. The process, which was essential for the experiment's success, was completed by Enzo.
2. The cake that I worked on all day long is being eaten by Justin.
3. After the pattern has been applied to the fabric, work on the embroidery can be started.

Answer

Enzo completed the process, which was essential for the experiment's success.

- In the passive sentence, the *which*-clause makes the subject of the sentence excessively long. By converting the sentence to the active voice, the clause is moved to the predicate, which makes the sentence easier to understand.

Justin is eating the cake that I worked on all day long.

- The active voice works better in this sentence for the same reasons as sentence one. It is also likely that you would want to put emphasis on Justin in this sentence. After all, he's doing something that is (most likely) inconsiderate.

After you apply the pattern to the fabric, you can start working on the embroidery.

- This sentence is likely found in a set of instructions, which are usually written directly to the reader. Addressing "you" and avoiding the passive voice will make the instructions feel more natural and accessible.

Don't get the idea that the passive voice is always wrong and should never be used. It is a good writing technique when we don't want to be bothered with an obvious or too-often-repeated subject and when we need to rearrange words in a sentence for emphasis. The next page will focus more on how and why to use the passive voice.

Using the Passive Voice

There are several different situations where the passive voice is more useful than the active voice.

- When you don't know who did the action: *The paper had been moved.*
  - The active voice would be something like this: "Someone had moved the paper." While this sentence is technically fine, the passive voice sentence has a more subtle element of mystery, which can be especially helpful in creating a mood in fiction.

- When you want to hide who did the action: *The window had been broken.*
  - The sentence is either hiding who broke the window or they do not know. Again, the sentence can be reformed to say "Someone had broken the window," but using the word *someone* clearly indicates that someone (though we may not know who) is at fault here. Using the passive puts the focus on the window rather than on the person who broke it, as he or she is completely left out of the sentence.
- When you want to emphasize the person or thing the action was done to: *Caroline was hurt when Kent broke up with her.*
  - We automatically focus on the subject of the sentence. If the sentence were to say "Kent hurt Caroline when he broke up with her," then our focus would be drawn to Kent rather than Caroline.
- A subject that can't actually *do* anything: *Caroline was hurt when she fell into the trees.*
  - While the trees hurt Caroline, they didn't actually do anything. Thus, it makes more sense to have Caroline as the subject rather than saying "The trees hurt Caroline when she fell into them."

Note: It's often against convention in scholarly writing to use *I*. While this may seem like a forced rule, it also stems from the fact that scholars want to emphasize the science or research as opposed to the author of the paper. This often results in the passive voice being the best choice. This is not the case in other formal settings, such as in resumes and in cover letters.

? Exercise 3

Consider the following instances. In each case, determine why the writers might want to use active or passive voice. Write an example sentence based on their circumstances.

1. Antonella made an error in her calculations that ruined an experiment. This error ended up costing both time and materials. She has to write a report to her boss. What might she say about the experiment?
2. Isabel is writing a supernatural thriller. Her main character, Liam, notices that his keys aren't where he left them. How might Isabel word this realization?
3. Thiago is writing a cover letter to apply for a new job. He is listing out tasks that he does at his current job. How would he want to word these items?

Answer

Antonella would likely want to write in the passive voice. Even if her boss knows she made the error, writing in the passive will draw attention away from that fact. She might say something like this:

- An error was made that ended up costing time and resources. The experiment will have to be repeated with new materials.

Isabel could use either the passive or the active. It depends on the emphasis she wants. The passive voice subtly hints at a mysterious actor. The active voice blatantly states it:

- Liam's keys had been moved when he wasn't looking.
- Something—or someone—had moved Liam's keys when he wasn't looking.

Thiago would want to use the active voice. Since he's apply for a job, he would want to emphasize the fact that he is accomplishing the tasks: the fact that he's doing them is more important than the simple fact that the things were done. He might write something like the following:

- I currently work as a teaching assistant for a linguistics professor. I organize her mail, flagging important items so she knows what needs immediate attention; I aid her in her research, finding interesting articles and studies; and I often help her students when her attention is needed elsewhere.

Using the Passive

Now that we know there are some instances where passive voice is the best choice, how do we use the passive voice to it fullest? The answer lies in writing direct sentences—in passive voice—that have simple subjects and verbs. Compare the two sentences below:

- Photomicrographs were taken to facilitate easy comparison of the samples.
- Easy comparison of the samples was facilitated by the taking of photomicrographs.

Both sentences are written in the passive voice, but for most ears the first sentence is more direct and understandable, and therefore preferable. Depending on the context, it does a clearer job of telling us what was done and why it was done. Especially if this

sentence appears in the “Experimental” section of a report (and thus readers already know that the authors of the report took the photomicrographs), the first sentence neatly represents what the authors actually did—took photomicrographs—and why they did it—to facilitate easy comparison.

? Exercise 4

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? If there are any errors, rewrite the sentences accordingly.

1. The machine needs to be reset at 10:23, 11:12, and 11:56 every night.
2. The final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains, are going to be completed by Kajuana.
3. The difficult task of measuring minute fluctuations in weight was made easier by the use of a new digital scale.

Answer

Yes. In this case, it doesn’t matter who accomplishes the action; it simply needs to be done. If this sentence appears in an academic article, the passive may be even more appropriate, as that style often demands the actor be left out of the sentence. No. This would be better in the active voice. There are a lot of different parts to the sentence, and by converting the sentence to the active voice, they come in a more logical order that is easier to understand:

- Kajuana is going to complete the final steps, which need to be finished before the sun sets over the mountains.

No. This passive construction is very convoluted. An active sentence would serve well here:

- A new digital scale made it easier to measure minute fluctuations in weight.

As we mentioned in **Participles**, the passive voice can also be used following relative pronouns like *that* and *which*.

- I moved into the house **that was built** for me.
- Adrián’s dog loves the treats **that are given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **that was signed** by the Beastie Boys.

In each of these sentences, it is grammatically sound to omit (or *elide*) the pronoun and *to be*. Elision is used with a lot of different constructions in English; we use it shorten sentences when things are understood. However, we can only use elision in certain situations, so be careful when removing words! You may find these elided sentences more natural:

- I moved into the house **built** for me.
- Adrián’s dog loves the treats **given** to him.
- Brihanna has an album **signed** by the Beastie Boys

Additional Practice Exercises

? Exercise 5

Convert these passive voice sentences into the active voice:

1. Alana’s toes were crushed by the garage door.
2. The passive voice has likely been heard of by you.
3. Rebeca’s favorite spot in the lecture hall had been taken by the time she got to class.
4. When the passive voice is overused, you often end up with flat writing.

Answer

The garage door crushed Alana’s toes. You’ve likely heard of the passive voice. Because there’s a descriptive phrase, there are a few options when revising this sentence:

- Someone had taken Rebeca’s favorite spot in the lecture hall by the time she got to class.
- By the time Rebeca got to class, someone had taken her favorite spot in the lecture hall.

When you overuse the passive voice, you often end up with flat writing.

? Exercise 6

Read the following sentences. Are they using the passive effectively? Or should they be rewritten as active sentences?

- Maren was hit by several branches as she slid down the hill.

- A lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate has been inspired by this increase in technology.
- Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.

Answer

Yes, this sentence uses the passive effectively. Since the subject of this sentence—*several branches*—can't actually do anything, it's best to put the emphasis on *Maren*, the person the actions were done to. This sentence does not use the passive well. The passive voice has made the sentence a lot more complicated then it needs to be. The active would read something like this:

- This increase of technology has inspired a lot of discussion about whether technology is hurting or helping our ability to communicate.

Either voice could be appropriate here. If you want to focus on the listeners, the passive voice is correct. If you want to focus on the lyrics, the sentence should be changed to the active voice.

- **Passive:** Listeners are encouraged by the lyrics to cast aside their fear and be themselves.
- **Active:** The lyrics encourage listeners to cast aside their fear and be themselves

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9.10: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Modifier Mistakes

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily fixed.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

TIP: SIMPLE MODIFIERS

Simple modifiers, such as *only, almost, just nearly,* and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner

Dangling Modifiers



Video 9.10.1

Grammar: Dangling Modifiers. **Provided by:** OWL Purdue. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

TIP: Identifying Dangling Modifiers

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

   Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

   After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

   Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

? Exercise 2

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth

✔ Writing at Work 9.10.1

Modifying phrases, especially verbal phrases (most of the modifiers in the above exercise are verbal phrases because they describe an action), are used often in business writing. In business writing, writers need to describe two actions or processes that occur at the same time. Because much business writing is also abstract, such situations are rife for dangling modifiers to occur. Be alert for dangling or misplaced modifiers in these situations!

? Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Share your results with a classmate.

? Exercise 4

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

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9.11: Sentence Variety

Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste even though it contained most of your favorite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse required to engage a reader. Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

In this chapter, you will follow a student named Noemi who has written a draft of an essay but needs to refine her writing. This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.



Video 9.11.1

Sentence Variety Lesson. **Provided by:** VirtualTeacherGirl. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

> During my time in office, I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text clearer for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

> During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

>

Tip

Effective writers often implement the "rule of three," which is basically the idea that things that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.

Exercise 1

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.

2. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.

3. Walking out in nature can be a very relaxing activity. By nature, I mean the ocean, the woods, mountains, or even a neighborhood with a lot of trees.

4. Reading is like travelling in the mind. A reader can feel like they've gone to Turkey, Nepal, and Belize all in one evening.

5. Vaping can be a dangerous habit, especially if vaping THC. Vitamin E oil is sometimes added to vaping cartriges. Hundres of young people have had permanent lung damage from vaping THC.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Remember, there are many ways to combine sentences, but if you have questions, ask them in class.

Writing at Work

At some point in your career, you will probably find you need to write a cover letter or statement of interest for a job. Writers of cover letters usually find that their initial draft has too much "I" in it, and it sounds a little self-centered, perhaps. While you must use "I" in a cover letter/statement of interest because it is about **you,** varying your sentence structure will allow you to say a lot about yourself without sounding like you are overusing "I."

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

- John and Amanda will be analyzing this week’s financial report.
- The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.
- Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence—*John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety.

Noemi wrote an essay about the 2008 government bailout. Read this excerpt from Noemi’s essay:

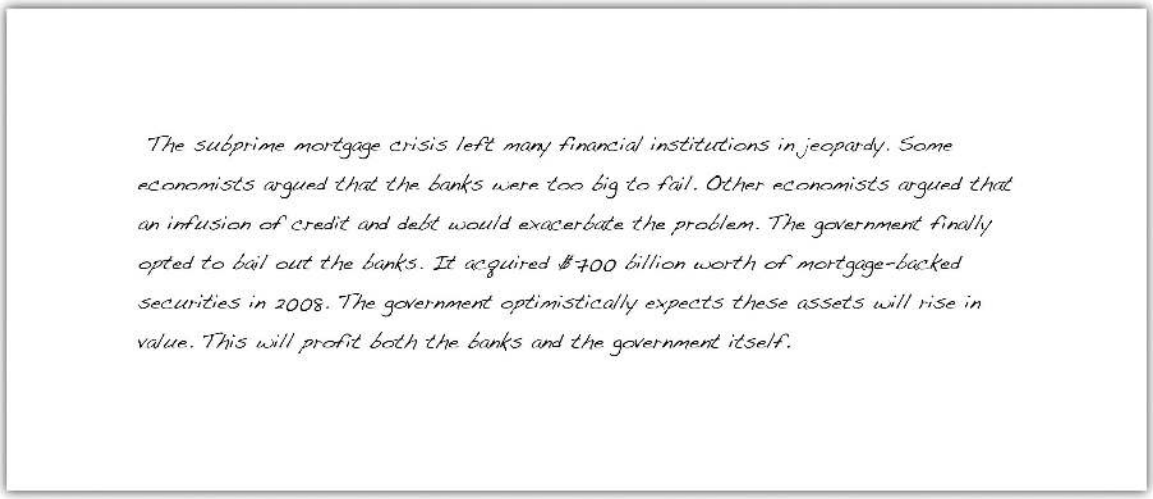


Figure: This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences, using Noemi's essay as an example.

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in *–ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Notice the difference between the following sentences:

- She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
- Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective for fiction writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful dramatic effect. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

- Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.
- Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed him under arrest.
- Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

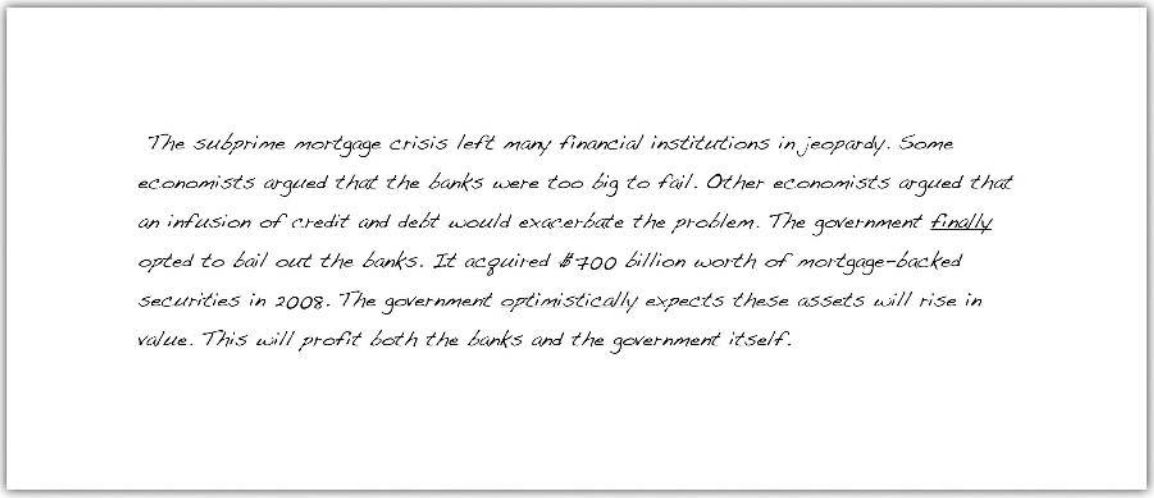


Figure: Noemi has used two adverbs in her essay that could be moved to the beginning of their respective sentences. Notice how the following revised version creates a more varied paragraph:

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Finally, the government opted to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. Optimistically, the government expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

? Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Jeff snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
4. Mayor Danielson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.
5. The dancer lithely glided across the stage before she began the pas-de-deux.



Figure:

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition).

Common Prepositions

above	beneath	into	till
across	beside	like	toward
against	between	near	under
after	beyond	off	underneath
among	by	on	until
around	despite	over	up
at	except	past	with

before	for	since	without
behind	from	through	
below	inside	throughout	

Read the following sentence:

- The child opened his birthday present **with excitement**.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table.* The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

- The child opened his birthday present **with extreme excitement**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

- **With excitement,** the child opened his birthday present.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the child—to the manner in which the child is opening the present. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is bold in each:

- The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.
- **In the doctor's office**, the bandaged man waited.
- My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m**.
- **At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.
- The teenagers exchanged drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
- **Under the railway bridge**, the teenagers exchanged drugs and money.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing. Take another look at Noemi's essay on the government bailout.

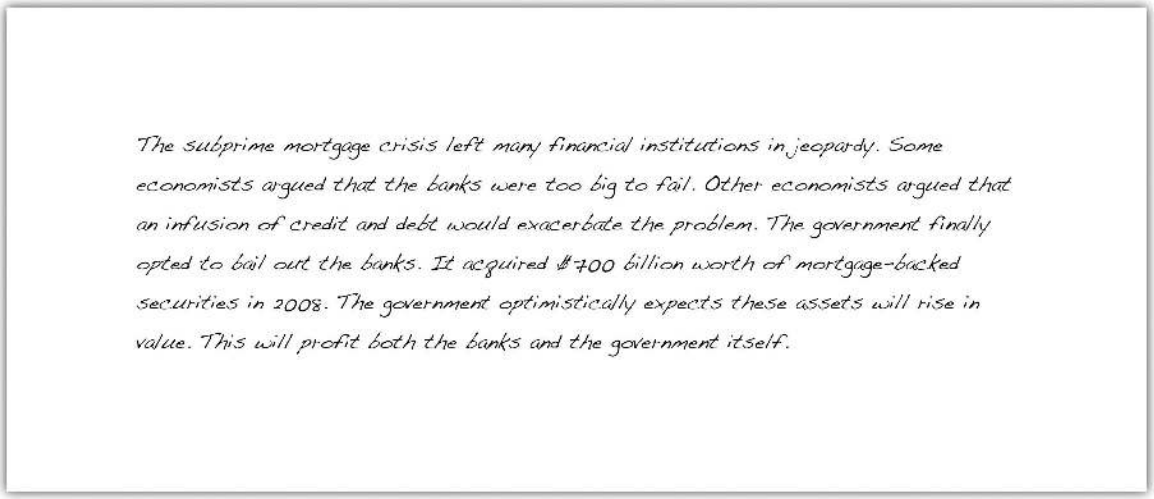
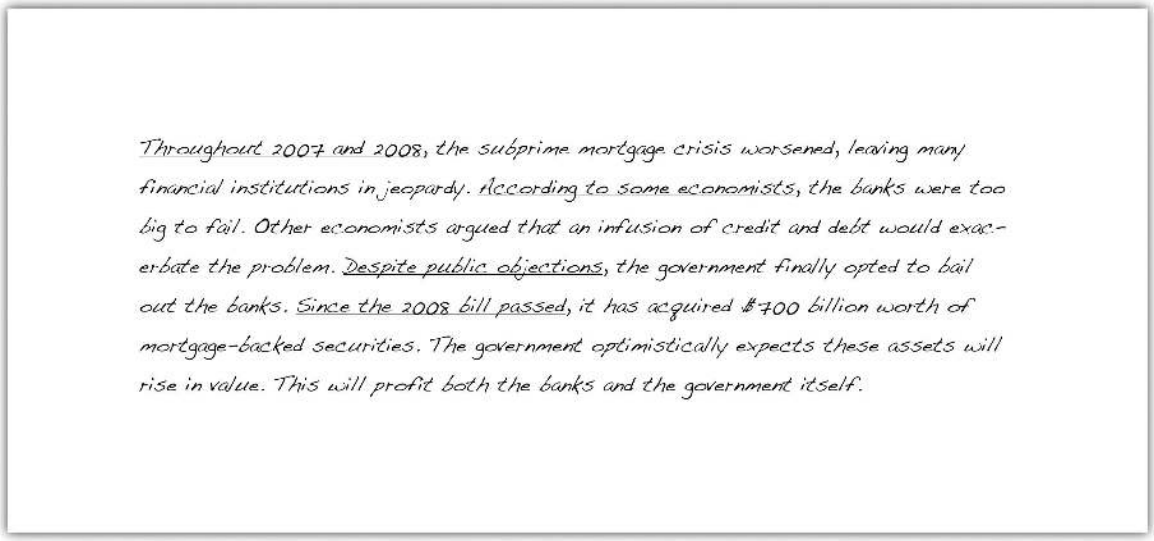


Figure: Now read the revised version.



The underlined words are all prepositional phrases. Notice how they add additional information to the text and provide a sense of flow to the essay, making it less choppy and more pleasurable to read.

Unmovable Prepositional Phrases

Not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

- I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. “Without whipped cream I would like a chocolate sundae” does not make as much (if any) sense. It dangles because it is not right next to what it describes. Just like a verbal phrase or any modifying phrase, a prepositional phrase needs to be placed right next to what it describes. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

In addition, writers can sometimes transform prepositional phrases into adjectives when the prepositional phrase originally described a noun.

Sentence with too many prepositional phrases (in bold): Oftentimes, the governor revises the California budget **in May** when the revenue numbers **from taxes** are in, but that only leaves two months **until the end of the fiscal year** to change spending.

Sentence with some prepositional phrases (in bold) turned into adjectives (in blue): Oftentimes, the governor revises the California budget **in May** when the tax revenue numbers are in, but that only leaves the the final two months **of the fiscal year** to change spending.

Exercise 3

On a separate piece of paper, move prepositional phrases around in the following paragraph to add variety or add some to appropriate places in the text.

Suburban economic development largely depends on three factors: proximity to a major economic center, transportation access, and the education level of the local workforce. The most successful suburban economic centers are located at the crossroads of two major interstates and have public and private transportation options available. It may be in the best interest of suburban areas within 30 miles of an urban area and looking to expand economically to invest in public transportation (light rail and/or bus) despite their need for subsidies. Economic analysis may show that a combination of local, state, and federal subsidies will make such investment feasible given the amount of projected growth. Even if the full amount of growth does not materialize, the greater ease with which local residents can commute to urban centers may allow for population growth and more moderate economic expansion of the suburban area and allow it to develop into a smaller hub with its own sphere of influence.

Collaboration

Compare what you did with a classmate.

Writing at Work

The overuse of prepositional phrases often occurs when our thoughts are jumbled and we are unsure how concepts or ideas relate to one another. If you are preparing a report or a proposal, take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline before writing a rough draft. Read the draft aloud, either to yourself or to a colleague, and identify areas that are rambling or unclear. If you notice that a particular part of your report contains several sentences over twenty words (or the equivalent of two lines), you should double check that particular section to make certain that it is coherent and does not contain unnecessary prepositional phrases. Reading aloud sometimes helps detect unclear and wordy sentences. You can also ask a colleague to paraphrase your main points to ensure that the meaning is clear.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb



Figure: Unsplash

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

1. A truck was parked in the driveway.
2. Parked in the driveway was a truck.

1. A copy of the file is attached.
2. Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—*a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus. We can apply this method to an academic essay. Take another look at Naoei's paragraph.

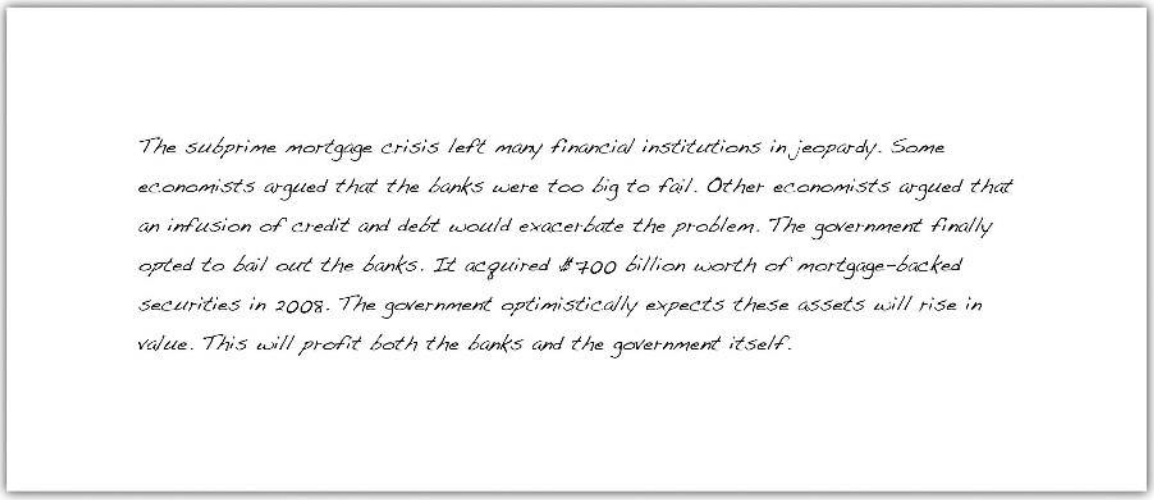


Figure: To emphasize the subject in certain sentences, Noemi can invert the traditional sentence structure. Read her revised paragraph:

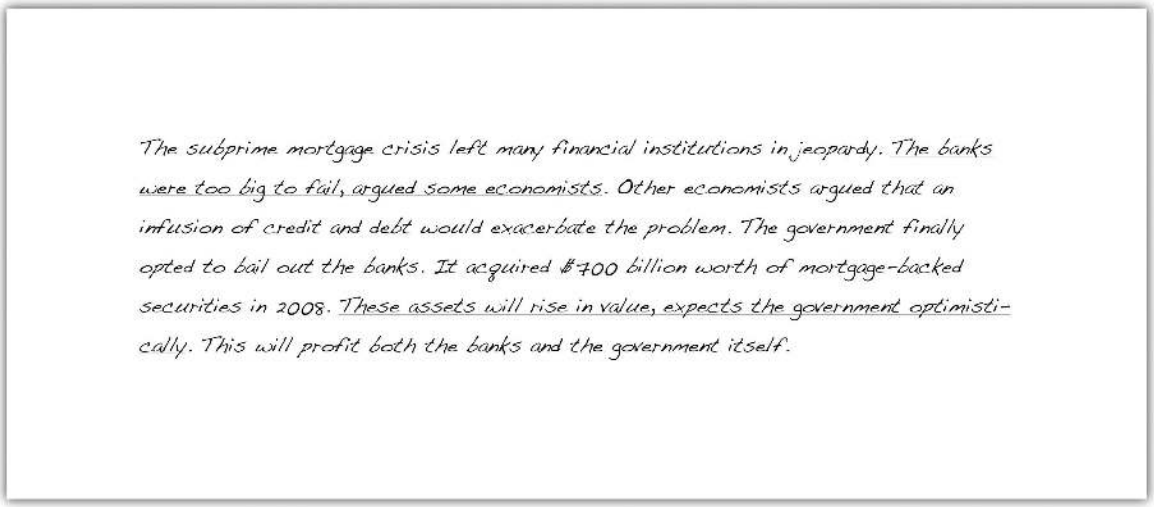


Figure:).

? Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety



Figure:

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ing* Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *–ing* verb form—*singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence (see "Modifiers" section of this chapter). Read the following example:

Original sentences: Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.

Revised sentence: Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *–ing* modifier, add *–ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the one of the subjects (*He*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an *–ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

1. Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

   This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

2. Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

   This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an *–ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.

End: Maria filed the final report, **meeting her deadline**.

Tip:

A common mistake when combining sentences using the *–ing* verb form is to misplace the modifier so that it is not logically connected to the rest of the sentence. This creates a dangling modifier. For more about how to avoid this, see the "Modifiers" page earlier in this chapter.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ed* Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an *–ed* verb form—*stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the *–ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

- **Original sentences:** The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.
- **Revised sentence:** Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *–ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *–ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *–ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately next to what it modifies in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *–ing* or *–ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences. Take a look at how Noemi might use modifiers in her paragraph.

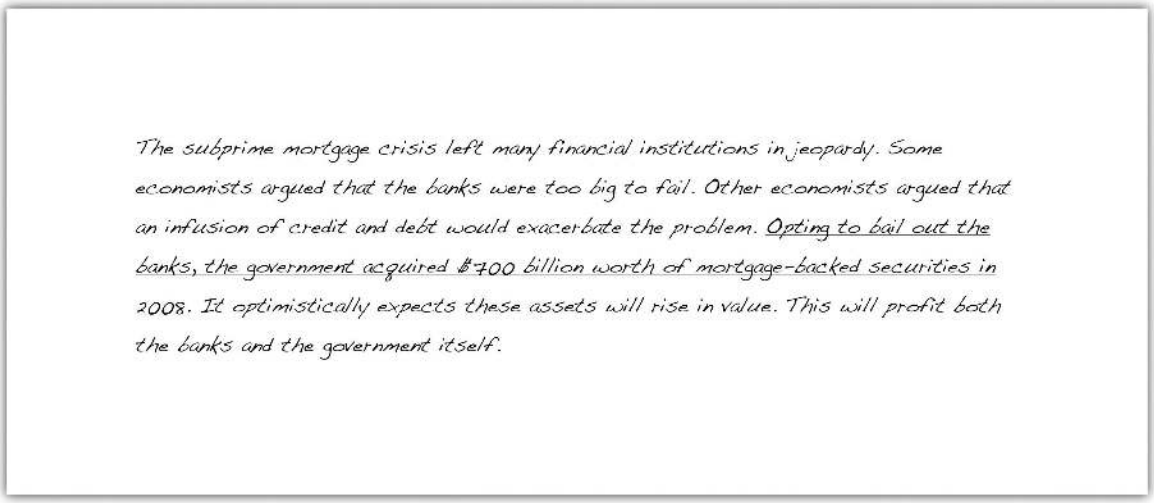


Figure: to draw a connection between the government's decision to bail out the banks and the result of that decision—the acquisition of the mortgage-backed securities.

? Exercise 5

Combine the following sentences so that you have a core clause and a modifying phrase beginning with -ed.

1. Xiana was floored by winning the grand prize. She didn't know what to say.
2. Danielle was sad that her cat passed away. She consoled herself remembering the time that he had ruined her computer.
3. They were shocked at the comedian's punch line. They didn't think it was funny at all.
4. He had mellowed out after the argument. He realized that going to the beach relaxed him.
5. The football was fumbled at the goal line. The football squirted around between players on the opposing teams.

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

- **Original sentences:** The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.
- **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

- **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence. Take a look at how Noemi might incorporate relative clauses into her essay.



Figure: Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from Naomi's essay without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Tip

To check the punctuation of relative clauses, assess whether or not the clause can be taken out of the sentence without changing its meaning. If the relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it should be placed in commas. If the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not require commas around it.

? Exercise 6

Join the following sentences by creating relative clauses.

1. Uncle Bob is a sailor. He has been everywhere.
2. Aunt Edna paints portraits. You met her last year.
3. My new car broke down on the bridge. The car cost a bundle.
4. Save the seat for me. The seat is closest to the front.
5. We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa. We honeymooned there.
6. Joe's cat was mistaken for a rat. Its tail is hairless.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

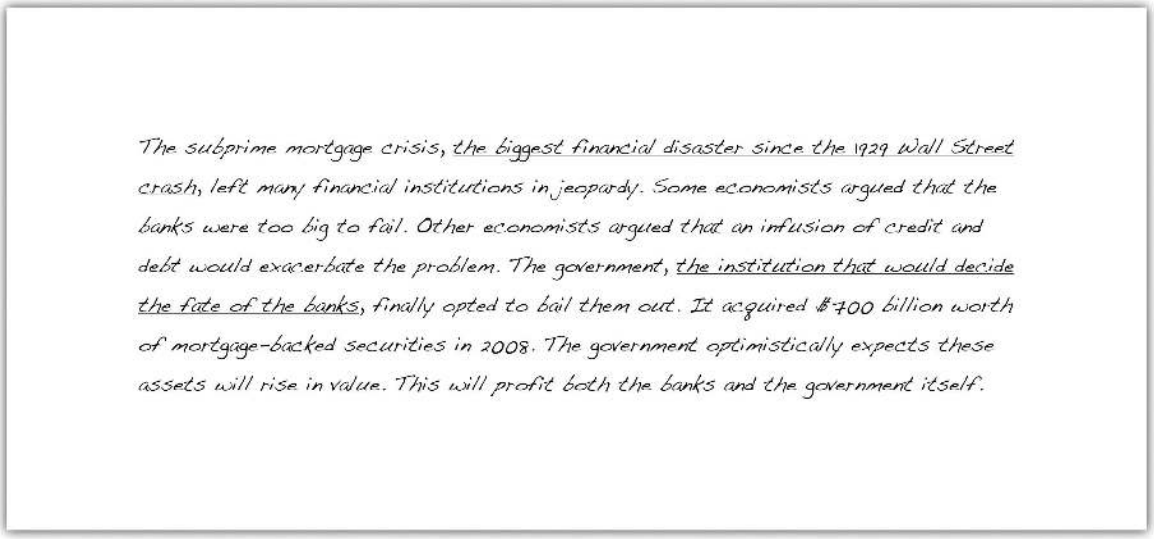
A noun phrase appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

- **Original sentences:** Greta Thunberg is a 16-year-old environmental activist. She is from Sweden.
- **Revised sentence:** Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old environmental activist, is from Sweden.

In the revised sentence, *"a 16-year-old environmental activist"* is an appositive because it renames Greta Thunberg. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

- **Appositive after noun:** No one expected that Scott, a poorly trained athlete, would win the race.
- **Appositive before noun:** A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set of commas. Take a look at the way Noemi uses appositives to include additional facts in her essay.



? Exercise 7

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section.

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

? Exercise 8

Children's stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children's story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned on this page, including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.

✔ Writing at Work

In addition to varying sentence structure, consider varying the types of sentences you are using in a report or other workplace document. Most sentences are declarative, but a carefully placed question, exclamation, or command can pique colleagues' interest, even if the subject material is fairly dry. Imagine that you are writing a budget analysis. Beginning your report with a rhetorical question, such as "Where is our money going?" or "How can we increase sales?" encourages people to continue reading to find out the answers. Although they should be used sparingly in academic and professional writing, questions or commands are effective rhetorical devices.

Contributors and Attributions

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9.12: Relative Clauses

A *clause* is a group of related words that has a subject and a verb. A *relative clause* provides additional information about a noun, pronoun, or an entire clause that is already in the sentence, by telling which one, what kind of, how many, or more about the nature of something.



Video 9.12.1

RELATIVE CLAUSES in 4 Steps. **Authored by:** Insights to English. Standard YouTube License.

Rules for Using Relative Clauses

Relative clauses use a relative pronoun to refer to a pronoun or noun that appears earlier in the sentence. They are sometimes also referred to as adjective clauses although that is a broader category of modifier, of which relative clauses are a part. Relative pronouns can only be used to refer to something earlier in that same sentence. To avoid confusion, a relative clause almost always appears immediately following the noun, pronoun, or clause it modifies. It must refer to something earlier in the same sentence. Sentences cannot begin with relative pronouns, which begin relative clauses.

Rule 1:

Relative clauses should begin with a relative pronoun that refers to the correct type of noun (see table).

Use the Correct Word

Relative Pronoun	Refers To	Replaces	Examples
who	people	I, we, you, he, she, they (as subjects of the sentence)	Uncle Jeff, who is a sailor, has been everywhere. (Uncle Jeff is a sailor. He has been everywhere.)
whom	people	me, us, you, her, him, them (as objects of verbs or prepositions)	Aunt Edna, whom you met last year, paints portraits. (Aunt Edna paints portraits. You met her last year.)
whose	possessives	mine, our, your, his, her, their, its	Joe's cat, whose tail is hairless, was mistaken for a rat. (Joe's cat was mistaken for a rat. Its tail was hairless.)
which	things	it, they, them	My new car, which cost a bundle, broke down on the bridge. (My new car broke down on the bridge. It cost a bundle.)

Relative Pronoun	Refers To	Replaces	Examples
that	people or things	I, we, you, he, she, it, they, me, us, him, her, them	Sarah wants to buy the sofa that is in the window of the department store. (Sarah wants to buy the sofa. It is in the window of the department store.) Save the seat that is closest to the front for me. (Save the seat for me. It is closest to the front.)
when	time	then	Last week, when we were shopping, I bought lunch. (Last week, I bought lunch. We were shopping then.)
where	place	there	We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa, where we honeymooned. (We had a lovely hotel in Ixtapa. We honeymooned there.)

Rule 2:

A relative clause can begin or end with a preposition, but not both.

Correct: She wore an outfit for which she received many compliments.

Sort of okay: She wore an outfit that she received many compliments on.

Incorrect: She wore an outfit on which she received many compliments on.

Rule 3:

If a preposition is in the sentence when it's taken apart, then there should be a preposition in the relative clause.

Taken apart:

She wore a dress.

She received many compliments for it.

Together:

She wore an outfit for which she received many compliments.

Relative Clauses and Comma Usage

Whether a comma is needed before the relative pronoun depends on whether the relative clause is **restrictive** or **nonrestrictive.**

A **restrictive** reference means that the thing or person the pronoun refers to is part of a group.

A **nonrestrictive** reference means that the thing or people the pronoun refers to is all of a group.

Rule 4:

When the situation is restrictive, do not use a comma before the relative pronoun.

For instance:

- The place **where** they were from was very hot and dry. (It's one of many places.)
- The people **who** were late had taken mass transit. (Not all of the people were late.)
- The tools **that** were stolen were in an unlocked box. (Some of the tools were stolen)

Rule 5:

“That” is always restrictive.

Rule 6:

When the situation is nonrestrictive, use a comma before the relative pronoun.

For instance:

- South America**, where** they are from, has many different cultures. (This implies that they are all from South America.)
- The people**, who** were late, had taken mass transit. (This implies all the people were late.)
- The tools**, which** were stolen, were in an unlocked box. (All of the tools were stolen.)

Rule 7:

“Which” is always nonrestrictive.

? Exercise 1

For each of these sentence sets:

- *First fill in the blank on line **a** with a personal pronoun that makes it a complete sentence.*
- *Then, fill in the blank on line **b** with the relative pronoun that makes it a relative clause.*
- Refer to the above table listing personal and relative pronouns if you need to.

Compare your answers with a classmate.

Example:

a Poodles are smart dogs. They make great companions.

b Poodles, which make great companions, are smart dogs.

1. a The man got a ticket. _____ parked his car next to mine.

b The man _____ parked his car next to mine got a ticket.

2. a Dr. Thompson enjoys baseball. _____ teaches geology.

b Dr. Thompson, _____ teaches geology, enjoys baseball.

3. a This book is available in our library. I ordered _____.

b This book, _____ I ordered, is available in our library.

4. a The partner also earned an A. You worked with _____.

b This partner with _____ you worked also earned an A.

5. a He moved to Arizona. The climate was drier _____.

b He moved to Arizona, _____ the climate was drier.

6. a The little girl played ball. _____ braids were tucked in her cap.

b The little girl, _____ braids were tucked in her cap, played ball.

7. a I tattled to _____.

b To _____ did you tattle?

? Exercise 2

Combine the following sentence sets to create one sentence with a relative clause. Ensure the punctuation is correct. 1. My cell phone battery is starting to die. My cell phone shuts down at 15%. 2. The Democratic presidential debate was aired on Tuesday night. Saturday Night Live parodies the presidential debates. 3. I am going to Phoenix this summer. It is very hot in Phoenix. 4. Rachel and Rochelle watch horror movies. Horror movies terrify and thrill them. 5. Violence seems to be everywhere on the media. Media violence makes people feel more in danger than they actually are. 6. The children were playing baseball in the street. Some of the children scattered when the window shattered.

? Exercise 3

Find two sentences in your own writing that have relative clauses. Write them down. If they are incorrect, fix them following the original. If they are correct, just write down the originals.

Alternatively, find two places in your writing where you name something at the end of the sentence and repeat that name at the beginning of the next sentence. This is a good place to combine your sentences using a relative clause.

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9.13: Key Takeaways

- Use parentheses, dashes, and hyphens in your writing to help with style and voice -- but use them sparingly.
- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers and is important for your credibility at work.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.
- Strong sentence focus reduces wordiness and creates clearer and more concise sentences.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate sentences are characterized by the use of a subordinate conjunction.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand and, thus, distract the reader.
- Sentence variety reduces repetition in a piece of writing and adds emphasis to important points in the text.
- Sentence variety can be introduced to the beginning of sentences by starting a sentence with an adverb, starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase, or by inverting the subject and verb.
- Combine ideas, using modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives, to achieve sentence variety.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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Thumbnail: pixabay.com/photos/grammar-m...-glass-389907/

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10.1: Grammar Introduction

Learning Objectives

learning objectives

- Understand basic sentence structure and how to arrange modifying phrases and clauses around a basic sentence structure.
- Understand verb usage and subject-verb agreement.
- Understand nouns and many grammar constructions related to nouns.
- Understand the rules behind various types of punctuation, especially commas.

This chapter explain and provides practice in the rules of English grammar, from a basic to an advanced level. Almost every student will need to practice some of the grammar in this chapter, but what needs practice will vary by person. Some people will need to practice more of the grammar skills. Consult with your instructor about which grammar skills they think will benefit you most. The skills are generally introduced in the order you would learn them in school. Don't be embarrassed if you feel you should already know some of these rules and skills. Some people miss some of them for a number of reasons in school, or it just didn't "click" the first time around. Other people were never taught them in the first place for a variety of reasons. In terms of grammar, learn what you need, and then apply it to your own writing. We have tried to keep the exercise examples at a level of what you are more likely to encounter in your college reading and writing. This prevents them from being overly simplistic and, thus, inapplicable to your own, more sophisticated writing.

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10.2: Word Order and Sentence Structure

For a variety of reasons, you may need some extra practice when writing in standard, or formal, English. People remember what they use, and if you don't use standard English most of the time when you speak, it is likely it will not flow out naturally when you write. Many students who don't use standard English on a day-to-day basis (and even some who do) make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills as you do with your speaking skills. We will start out with the sentence core because everything builds from that.

Components of a Sentence

Every language has its own sentence structure and rules for what is included. The basic structure of sentences in English is S-V-O, or subject-verb-object. This means that, in most cases, the subject always appears before the verb.

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. (Some verbs (transitive verbs) require and object (O) and some verbs (intransitive verbs) don't to make the complete idea. Most verbs are transitive. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentence has three independent clauses (in brackets).

[We went to the store,] [we bought the ingredients on our list,] and then [we went home].

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

Identifying the Verb

Types of Verbs

It may be easiest to first identify the verb in a sentence even though it generally appears after a subject. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs. A verbs that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question what is the subject doing? In the following sentences, the bold words are action verbs.

The dog **barked** at the jogger.

He **gave** a short speech before we ate.

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the bold words are linking verbs.

The coat **was** old and dirty.

The clock **seemed** broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action verb: The boy **looked** for his glove.

Linking verb: The boy **looked** tired.

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of be, do, or have. The word can is also used as a helping verb.

The restaurant **is** known for its variety of dishes.

We **have** seen that movie three times.

? Exercise 1

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _____
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _____

3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _____
4. The book was filled with notes from class. _____
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _____
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _____
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. _____
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces. _____.

The Time Test

If you need to identify the verb in a subject, you can apply the time test, which is:

- Changing the tense of the sentences
- Observing which words change. The words that change are the verb.

Example:

Present tense: Dax, my German Shepherd, **loves** to run at the beach.

Past tense: Dax, my German Shepherd, **loved** to run at the beach.

We can see that "loves" changed to "loved," so "loves" is the verb in the original sentence.

In college classes, though, we tend to write more complicated sentences than this. There may be more than one subject and/or verb, the subject may be compound, or it may be embedded into a pronoun. Verbal phrases (which can easily be confused with verbs) may also add description in a sentence. How to tell what the verb is? Apply the time test!

Examples:

- **Present tense:** Hauling a load of wood, the truck overturns and wood flies everywhere.
- **Past tense:** Hauling a load of wood, the truck overturned and wood flew everywhere.
- The verbs are "overturns" and "flies."

- **Present (progressive) tense:** I am hurrying around the house, trying to gather everything I need before I have to catch my plane.
- **Past tense:** I hurried around the house, trying to gather everything I needed before I had to catch my plane.
- The verbs are "am hurrying," "need," and "have."

- **Past/past progressive:** My friend, whom I have known for fifteen years, was very supportive during this time.
- **Future/future progressive:** My friend, whom I will have known for fifteen years, will be very supportive during this time.
- The verbs are "have known" and "was". Notice that, in this case, the subject and the verb are separated by an intervening descriptive clause with commas around it.

- **Past tense:** Daria and Oswaldo played hockey.
- **Present tense:** Daria and Oswaldo play hockey.
- The verb is "played."

Identifying the Subject

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Once you have identified the verb, you can then easily identify the subject by asking "who or what does the verb?" Sometimes the subject may be compound (more than one), and sometimes the subject may be separated from the verb.The following examples

refer to the example sentences in the time test, above.

Examples:

Who loves to run at the beach? Dax does. Dax is the subject of the sentence.

What was hauling a load of wood? **What** flew everywhere? The truck and wood are the subjects in the sentences.

Who was hurrying around the house? **Who** was gathering everything they needed? **Who** needed to catch a plane? The subject of each of these is "I," but notice there are three "I"s in the original sentence, so each of them would be a subject.

Who was very supportive? **Who** has known the friend? "My friend" and "I" are the subjects. This one is tricky because of the construction of the original sentence. There are actually two clauses (subject-verb units) in the sentence. We can separate them to make it easier to figure out the subjects. We can transform the original sentence into: "My friend was very supportive during this time" and "I have known her for fifteen years." Examining each of the sentences separately makes it easier to figure out.

Who played hockey? Daria and Oswaldo. There is one compound subject in this sentence.

Sometimes, a whole phrase will function as a subject. Consider the example below.

To write an award-winning novel is my ultimate goal. When applying the time test, we would discover that "is" is the verb. We would then ask ourselves, "**what** is my ultimate goal?". The answer is the subject: **To write an award-winning novel**.

? Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, write the following sentences and write "V" above the subject(s) and "S" above the subject(s).

1. The sun never completely disappears during the summer in the Arctic.
2. Following her final exam, Doreen picked up her sister from the airport.
3. She was feeling blue until her favorite song played on her phone.
4. Then she began dancing around the room; her day improved greatly after that.
5. Music can modify our mood greatly, and we can change our mood by listening to different kinds of music with different tempos and in varying keys.



Video 10.2.1

Basic Sentence Structures

Subject + Verb

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, in English, this only happens in command (imperative) style sentences when the implied you tell and implied "you" (someone else) to do something. Otherwise, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

subject + verb
Samantha sleeps.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that shows a relation between a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Preposition also begin prepositional phrases. In this case, they must be followed by a noun or a noun phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

subject + verb + prepositional phrase
Samantha sleeps on the couch.

On is the preposition. *On the couch* is the prepositional phrase.

Common Prepositions		
about	beside	off
above	between	on
across	by	over
after	during	through
against	except	to
along	for	toward
among	from	under
around	in	until
at	into	up
before	like	with
behind	of	without

Tip: Be careful when using "on" as a preposition. It is overused when speaking and many times another preposition is the correct one to use. On basically means "on top of." Many times people mistakenly use "on" in place of "about" (i.e., We talked about something) or "of." For a listing of the meanings of each of the above prepositions, please check your favorite dictionary or dictionary app.

? Exercise 3

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.
6. Collin finished his homework at the library on campus.

Subject + Verb + Compliment

A compliment to a verb can be a noun or an adjective. In both cases, the comliment follows a linking verb. Here are some examples with the linking verb italicized and the complement bolded:

Computers *are* **tools.** (Noun compliment)

Computers *are* **expensive.** (Adjective compliment)

Subject + Verb + Adverb

In this case, an adverb (which describes how something was done) follows the main verb.

Compuers *calculate* **quickly** (adverb)

Subject + Verb + Direct Object

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

subject + verb + direct object
Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb *writes*.

Tip:

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what? or* who?

Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.

What did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

Who did Maurice kick? The direct object (receiving the kick) ,*Tom.*

Subject + Verb + Indirect Object

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb

subject + verb + indirect object
Janice writes me a letter

The action (*writes)* is performed for or to the indirect object (*me).*

Tip:

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it an be discovered by asking *to whom?* or *for whom?* after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children.*

? Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject (S), verb (V), direct object (DO), and indirect object (IO) in the following sentences using the abbreviations here in the list.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad brought Grandma her glasses.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

? Exercise 5

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

? Exercise 6

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.

4. So full were we during the walk home.

5. I will make the pizza next time.

Writing at Work

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

Note: See the end-of-chapter exercises for more complicated sentence structure sentence rewrites.

Placement of Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind that a common error is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun and place a comma between the adjectives:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress:

Example: The intriguing, long movie held my interest even though it lasted almost three hours.

Tip:

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb. (This is also called a noun compliment.)

Example: My biology class is interesting.

Exercise 7

On a separate piece of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1. book: old, small, Spanish

A small, old, Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity/language)

2. photograph: new strange

3. suit: wool, green funny

4. opinion: refreshing, new

5. dress: fashionable, purple

Exercise 8

On a separate piece of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.

1. eyes: black, mesmerizing

2. jacket: vintage, orange, suede

3. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
4. vacation: fun, skiing
5. movie: hilarious, independent

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10.3: Questions and Negative Statements



Figure: Unsplash

Question Form

The question form can be tricky, and even native speakers sometimes forget to include question marks at the end of questions.

Questions include the following four types of words:

- The "question words" of **who**, **what**, **where, when,** and **why** (most of the time). These are also known as the journalist words.
- Auxiliary word: "do," "does," or "did" or another modal
- A subject
- Main verb (sometimes with a complement after it)

Questions always end with a question mark: ?

Tip: Don't forget to write the question mark at the end of a question. Students sometime forget this on paper.

All the questions you may have about grammatically correct questions are probably answered in the following video, which is also really good for those who are still practicing conversation.



Video 10.3.1

Transforming a Sentence

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark.

Here is an example of moving the helping verb and adding a question mark.

Declarative Sentence: Sierra **can** pack these boxes.

Question (Interrogative form): Can Sierra pack these boxes**?**

Here is an example of adding the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and adding a question mark:

Sentence: Jolene skated across the pond.

Question: Did Jolene skate across the pond**?**

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Boyz n the Hood* is a film directed by John Singleton.
2. It won many awards.
3. It was one of the first movies to depict somewhat realistically the effects street life can have on young people.
4. The movie stars Cuba Gooding, Jr., Ice Cube, Lawrence Fishburne, Angela Basset, Regina King, Nia Long, and Morris Chestnut.
5. The movie has stood the test of time.
6. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
7. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
8. The article talks about conserving energy.
9. We need to reduce our budget.
10. Rusha is always complaining about her work.

Negative Statements

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are many times necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

Negative Words		
never	no	hardly
nobody	none	scarcely
no one	not	barely
nowhere		rarely

Common Helping Verbs		
am	is	are
was	were	be
being	been	have
has	had	do
does	did	can
could	may	might
must	will	should
would	ought to	used to



Figure: Unsplash

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

   Sentence: My guests are arriving now.

   Negative: My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. **Sentence:** Jennie has money.

   Negative: Jennie **has no** money.

3. The contraction *n't*. (This is the same as number 1; there is just a contraction rather than the spelled out *not*.)

   Sentence: Janetta does miss her mom.

   Negative: Janetta **doesn't** miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb *rarely*. (Note that "rarely" is an almost opposite, not a complete opposite.)

   Sentence: I always go to the gym after work.

   Negative: I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5. **Sentence:** Everybody gets the day off.

   Negative: Nobody gets the day off.

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.
3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.
6. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
7. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
8. He breathes loudly at night.
9. I communicate well with my family.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Paul called me yesterday.

Negative: Paul **did not** call me yesterday.

Sentence: Jamilee went to the grocery store.

Negative: Jamilee **never went** to the grocery store.

Sentence: Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Gina **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an *-ed* ending.

? Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, “Mom, I’m sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!” I was relieved.

Double Negatives

Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. Think of it like math -- two negatives cancel each other out and make a positive. And this is the opposite of what you mean. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

Double negative	Single negative
neg. + neg. I couldn’t find no paper	neg. I couldn’t find any paper.
neg. + neg. I don’t want nothing.	neg. I don’t want anything.

Tip
Ain't is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

? Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn’t like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can’t make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.Tip

? Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn’t hardly breathe. Ain’t nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn’t have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn’t do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn’t not wait for winter to come..

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10.4: Word Form

Word Form

Almost every word has a "root" -- a base unit of meaning around which the rest of the word is built. In English, most of the root words come from Greek, Latin, or Anglo Saxon. A word may also have a prefix that adds on to the meaning. For example, "prepare" has the root, "pare," which means "to cut close" or "to give birth to" -- so we can interpret this meaning an act of creation or doing. "Pre" means "before." Both "pre" and "pare" are from Latin. The word "prepare" then means before an act of doing or creation. A suffix is the word ending and indicates the part of speech or function within a sentence. For instance, although the word "prepare" is a verb, adding "ing" to the end turns it into a noun, so the meaning becomes "the act of getting ready." The word can then be used a a subject, an object of a preposition, etc. Thus, "prepare" and "preparing" would appear in two very different places in an English sentence.

Most of the time in English, the part of speech (or verb tense in the case of verbs) is indicated by the suffix (ending) of the word. As you know, word order is very important in English to indicate meanings and relationships. The word form needs to work with the word order to reinforce the meaning through the form. Many English language learners, as well as native speakers, are not sure what ending to put on the word at least some of the time. This page is a review of word form although it is not exhaustive. For more information about verb tense and form, please see Chapter 12.6.

Table 12.5.1 -- Common Suffixes

Common Suffixes			
Nouns	**Adjectives**	**Verbs**	**Adverbs**
--er / --or / --ar (means "the person who does") (Turns a verb into a noun) **paint to painter**	--less (means "without") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **clue to clueless**	--ate (means "to make, have, become") **obviate**	--ly (means "how something is done") (Turns a verb into an adverb) **slow to slowly**
--ist (means "the person who is") (Noun) **theorist**	--ful (means "full of") (Turns a noun or verb into an adjective) **mourn to mournful**	--ify (means "to make, have, become") (Turns an adjective into a verb) **beauty to beautify**	--wise (means "in relation to") (Turns different kinds of words into an adverb) **other to otherwise**
--ion (means "the act of doing something) (Turns a verb into a noun) **act to action**	--able (means "can") (Turns a verb into an adjective) **work to workable**	--ize (means "to make, have, become") (Turns a noun into a verb) **sympathy to sympathize**	
--ence* (means "the act of doing something") (Turns an adjective into a noun) **violent to violence**	--y* (means "full of, covered with") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **sneeze to sneezy**		
--ment (means "the act of doing something; product or result of an action") (Turns a verb into a noun) **encourage to encouragement**	--ous (means "fll of, covered with) **harmony to harmonious**		
--ness (means "the state of being something") (Turns an adjective into a noun.) **kind to kindness**	--al (means "connected with") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **emotion to emotional**		
--ship (the state) **friendship**	--ish (means "like, similar to") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **child to childish**		

--ity (means "the state of being something") (Turns an adjective into a noun.) **clear to clarity**	--ic (means "like, similar to") (Turns a noun into an adjective) **athlete to athletic**		
	--ive (means "has qualities of") (Turns a verb into an adjective) **create to creative**		

* Sometime the spelling of a word ending may need to change to add on the suffix correctly. A commonly known spelling rule in this area is to change "y" to "i' before adding the ending. For example, change the "y" in "activit**y**" to "i" when pluralizing it to "activit**i**es." Nouns that end in "t" should be "c" when adding endings; for example, the "t" in "violen**t**" becomes "c" in "violen**c**e." When a word ends in a silent "e" and you need to add an ending that begins with a vowel, drop the "e" and add the ending.



Video 10.4.1

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life. Using the appropriate word form in your writing shows you understand how word variety and use is important. This also helps your writing be clear to the reader. The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words. Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words, especially if you are familiar with common Greek and Latin roots.

? Exercise 1

Change the bolded words in the following sentences so that they are right word form for the grammatical function in the sentence.

1. **Violent** is not the answer; talking is.
2. Macbeth was not a **virtue** character.
3. The **idealism** decided to work in the nonprofit sector.
4. Some dictators want to have world **dominate.**
5. **Create** is necessary for many careers, even in the sciences.
6. Madison warns against **factional** in The Federalist Papers.
7. I finished that test very **easy**.

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10.5: Verbs and Verb Tense

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this. Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might not understand the time frame you are talking or writing about. In addition, mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression, especially in a formal or work context.

One way to categorize verbs is whether they follow certain rules or not: regular verbs (verbs that follow tense rules consistently with regard to spelling) and irregular verbs (verbs that don't follow those rules). Unfortunately, in English, some of the most common verbs are also irregular.

Regular Verbs

Simple Tenses

Regular verbs follow the same patterns when shifting from the present to past tense or future tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate:

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have*, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: Tim *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)
Present Tense: Sue and Kimmy *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)
Past Tense: Yesterday, they *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Future Tense: I *will walk* to the store tomorrow. (Singular subject)

When *he*, *she*, or *it* doing the present tense action, remember to add *–s*, or *–es* to the end of the verb or to change the *y* to *–ies*.

When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add *–d* or *–ed* to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

For the most part, we focus on the simple past, present, and future tenses here. However, a list of all the tense can be found in the chart below. Notice that the examples all use regular verbs, and -- depending on the tense -- helping verbs as well.

VERB TENSE

	Past	Present	Future
Simple	**Action completed entirely in the past** Action Now **Use [v]-ed** for ***regular* verbs.** Diane listened to the Goo Goo Dolls yesterday. **Use:** the **past tense form for *irregular* verbs.** Paul drank too much coffee, which made him feel sick.	**The action is occurring now** Now Action **USE:** the **present tense form.** The tutors listen to what writers tell them. Karen walks to work every day because she believes that exercise is good for her.	**Action that will occur in the future**. Now Action **USE: will + [v]** Kassie will listen to the poets at the café tomorrow. Both Sue and Teresa will be USF graduates in about two years.
Perfect	**Action completed before another action in the past** Action Action Now **USE: had + [v]-ed** for ***regular* verbs.** Sarah had listened to that song many times before she heard it in the concert. **USE: had + the part participle form** for ***irregular* verbs.** Pete had drunk so much coffee that he couldn't sleep last night.	**Action that began in the past and is ongoing up until now** Now Action **USE: have/has + [v]-ed** for ***regular* verbs** Billy has always listened to his father's advice. **USE: has or have +** the **past participle form** for ***irregular* verbs** Leila has drunk a lot of cappuccinos in her lifetime.	**Future action that will take place before some other action** Now Action Action **USE: will + have [v]-ed** for ***regular* verbs** Anthony will have listened to all the lectures soon. **USE: will + have +** the **past participle form for *irregular* verbs** Cindy will have drunk all of her jasmine tea before vacation starts.
Progressive	**Action continuing through a specific period in the past** Action Past time Now **USE: was/were + [v]-ing** Joey was listening to the owls last night. Sue and Dane were out eating pizza at the new Italian restaurant.	**Action continuing through the present moment** Now Action **USE: am/is/are + [v]-ing** Johnny is listening to the game on his radio. The Giants are winning.	** Future continuous action** Now Action **USE: will + be + [v]-ing** Jerome will be listening to the wildlife when he goes camping next weekend.

Figure: by Erika Dyquisto.

Exercises

? Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Exercise 2

The infinitive (tenseless) form of the verb is included before each sentence. Rewrite each sentence with the correct tense of the verb that makes sense within the context of the sentence.

1. (to travel) Tomorrow, I _____ to visit my family.
2. (to work) I _____ hard every day.
3. (to run) I _____ all the way to the bus this morning so I could get to class on time.
4. (to request) Your presence is _____ at the party on May 3, 2020.
5. (to carry) They _____ their luggage up the hill to the vacation house they rented.
6. (to marry) Tom and John _____ on June 6, 2020.

Tip

When describing what happens in something you've read (on the computer or paper) or watched (in a video), use the simple present tense to describe that action. This is an academic convention. For example, you might write: Chewbacca *acts* as Han Solo's assistant and character commentator in *Star Wars*.

Progressive Tenses



Video 10.5.1

Present Progressive Tense

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as *I am going*, *I was going*, or *I will be going*.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of *to be*	+	*-ing* **(present participle)**
am/is/are	help	helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

Past Progressive Tense

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of *to be*	+	**-ing (present participle)**
was/were		helping

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I **were planning** a vacation.

This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

Future Progressive Tense

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

Future tense form of *to be*	+	**-ing (present participle)**
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I **will be dancing** in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes **will be reading** two of her poems.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)



Figure:

Tip

Many people casually speak in the present progressive tense when they really should use the simple present tense. Watch out for this in your writing!

Perfect Tenses

The three perfect tenses indicate that an action is complete. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle is used in the perfect tenses. Past participles are often called the *–ed* form of a verb because they are formed by adding *–d* or *–ed* to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in *-t* or *-en* (irregular verbs, see below). Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Present Perfect Tense

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+	**has or have**	+	**past participle**
I		have		helped

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I have worked as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

• Dmitri has just received an award from the Dean of Students. This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award.

The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Past Perfect Tense

Review the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	+	have or had	+	past participle
I		had		listened

Use the past perfect tense to describe a continuing situation that was completed by a certain time in the past.

- The bus had left by the time Theo arrived at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Future Perfect Tense

See the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	+	will have	+	past participle
I		will have		graduated

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (*you*) *will move* (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject *will have forgotten* (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

? Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).
4. Denise _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Perfect Progressive Tenses

Present Perfect Progressive

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of *to have*	+	been	+	--ing (present participle)
has or have		been		helping

- He has been talking for the past hour.

This sentence indicates that he started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

• I have been feeling tired lately.

This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb lately. You can also use the adverb recently when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Past Perfect Progressive

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of *to have*	+	**been**	+	**--ing (present participle)**
had		been		helping

- The employees had been talking until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I had been working all day.

This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

Future Perfect Progressive

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of *to have*	+	**been**	+	**--ing (present participle)**
will have		been		helping

- By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not use the same rules to create past tense.Here are some examples.

Present Tense: Lauren *keeps* all her letters.
Past Tense: Lauren *kept* all her letters.
Future Tense: Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

The videos below will give you some general ideas of how to identify and memorize irregular verbs.



Video 10.5.1



Video 10.5.1

Some of the most common irregular verbs are also the most common verbs in English: "to be," "to do," and "to have."

To Be, To Do, and To Have

The following table shows the past, present and future forms of these common irregular verbs.

Base Form	Past Tense Form	Present Tense Form	Future Tense Form
be	was/were	am/is/are	will be
do	did	do/does	will do
have	had	have/has	will have

Memorize the present tense forms of to be, to do, and to have. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of to be, to do, and to have used in sentences.

Past	Present	Future
To Be		
Yesterday I **was** angry.	Today I **am** angry.	Tomorrow I **will be** angry.
To Do		
I **did** my best yesterday.	I **do** my best today.	I **will do** my best tomorrow.
To Have		
Yesterday I **had** ten dollars.	Today I **have** ten dollars.	Tomorrow I **will have** ten dollars.

Remember the following uses of to be, to have and to do:

To Be

• I → am/was/will be

• you/we/they → are/were/will be

• he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

• I/you/we/they → have/had/will have

• he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

• I/you/we/they → do/did/will do

• he/she/it → does/did/will do

? Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs ***to be, to have,*** *and* ***to do*** *in the three simple tenses.*

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

Study the table below, "Irregular Verbs", which lists the most common irregular verbs.

Table 12.6: Irregular Verbs

Irregular Verbs			
Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke

Irregular Verbs			
Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Tip

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Exercise 6

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

? Exercise 7

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Verb Tense Consistency

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:
The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.
Consistent tense:
The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip:

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I *wanted* to be a fire fighter, but now I *am studying* computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state of being is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

? Exercise 8

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a "lord," and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants' families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant's day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

✔ Writing at Work

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

> I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experieces with the Customer Relationship Managment Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

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10.6: Modal Auxiliaries

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries to verbs.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that is used only with a main verb to help express the verb's mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	**modal auxiliary**	+	**main verb**
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English, which are shown in Table 12.7.

Table 12.7 -- Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I **can lift** this forty-pound box. (ability)
		We **can embrace** green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I **could beat** you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)
		We **could bake** a pie! (present possibility)
		Could we **pick** some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I **may attend** the concert. (uncertain future action)
		You **may begin** the exam. (permission)
		May I **attend** the concert? (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I **might attend** the concert (uncertain future action—same as *may*)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I **shall** go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I **should mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as *ought to*)
		Should I **call** my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I **will get** an A in this class. (intended future action)
		Will you **buy** me some chocolate? (favor)
		Will you **be finished** soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I **would like** the steak, please. (preference)
		Would you **like** to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)
		I **would go** with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
		He **would write** to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We **must be** on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I **ought to mail** my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

Use the following format to form a yes-no (closed) question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	**subject**	+	**main verb**
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal

   Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.

   Correct: I **can move** this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal

   Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.

   Correct: I **could move** to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row

   Incorrect: I should must *renew* my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

   Correct: I **should renew** my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal

   Incorrect: I renew my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

? Exercise 1

Edit the following short paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

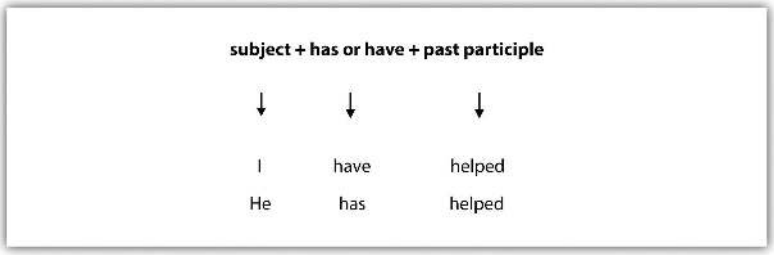


Figure: .

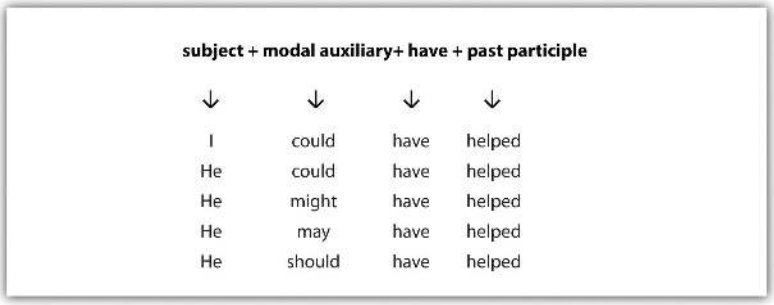


Figure: Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. **Incorrect:** Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2. **Incorrect:** Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man _____ (laugh).
2. The frogs _____ (croak).
3. My writing teacher _____ (smile).
4. The audience _____ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend _____ (giggled).

If you would like a more in-depth view of modal verbs, watch the following video:



Video 10.6.1

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10.7: Other Verb-Like Words and Their Functions

Verbs, as you know, carry tense and indicate time and mood. However, some forms of verb-like words don't carry tense and perform other functions in a sentence, such as acting as a subject or object, or acting as a descriptor. To understand this, you need to understand the basic, tense-less form of a verb, called an "infinitive." This term comes from the word "infinity," which implies outside of time.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often main verbs are followed by infinitives. Study the following table for examples. The infinitive follows the main verb because the main verb itself is what carries the tense.

Table 12.8.1 -- Infinitives and Verbs

	Infinitive
to help	Jessica **offered to help** her move.
to arrive	Mick **expects to arrive** early.
to win	Sunita **wants to win** the writing contest.
to close	He **forgot to close** the curtains.
to eat	She **likes to eat** late.

Tip

Never use a verb-like word with a suffix ("ing" or "ed") with "to" before it. This is mixing forms.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in *-ing*. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. **Traveling** is Cynthia's favorite pastime.
2. I enjoy **jogging**.
3. The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study the following table for examples.

Table 12.8.2 -- Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise **considered moving** to Paris.
cleaning	I **hate cleaning** the bathroom.
winning	Nate **imagines winning** an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she **has stopped worrying**.
taking	She **admitted taking** the pumpkin.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 12.8.3 -- Verbs that Take Infinitives or Gerunds

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds *and* Infinitives
begin	1. John **began crying**.
	2. John **began to cry**.
hate	1. Marie **hated talking** on the phone.
	2. Marie **hated to talk** on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell **forgot paying** the bills.
	2. Wendell **forgot to pay** the bills.
like	1. I **liked leaving** messages.
	2. I **liked to leave** messages.
continue	1. He **continued listening** to the news.
	2. He **continued to listen** to the news.
start	1. I **will start recycling** immediately.
	2. I **will start to recycle** immediately.
try	1. Mikhail **will try climbing** the tree.
	2. Mikhail **will try to climb** the tree.
prefer	1. I **prefer baking**.
	2. I **prefer to bake**.
love	1. Josh **loves diving**.
	2. Josh **loves to dive**.

? Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Past Participles

Past participles do many things, one of which can be to begin a descriptive, modifying phrase called a verbal phrase.

A past participle, as you may remember from earlier in this chapter, is a verb with an "ed" on the end, but in this case the word act as a descriptor (adjective or adverb) rather than a main verb that carries tense. Here are some examples:

Scared to sleep through her alarm, Megan asked her mom to wake her at 6 a.m.

To see how "scared" does not carry tense in this case, we can break up this sentence into two main ideas:

- She was **scared** to sleep through her alarm. (Scared is an adjective complement to the main verb, *was*. It just describes how she felt. Therefore, "scared" does not carry tense here.
- Megan asked her mom to wake her at 6 a.m. (The main verb is "asked," which carries the past tense.)

Notice:

When using a verbal phrase as a modifier, only a past participle or gerund is used. No additional verb is included in the modifying phrase.

? Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, combine and rewrite the following sentence sets by changing one of the sentences in each set to a verbal (modifying) phrase and adding that on to the main clause. You may need to change a main verb into a verbal ending in --ed or --ing to do so.

1. She felt antsy. She went for a run.
2. He knew that he did well on the final. Kendrick relaxed about his grade.
3. They felt frustrated that the weather wasn't cooperating with their plans. They decided to go to the movies instead.
4. Donia was excited to open her presents. She couldn't wait for her birthday to arrive.
5. Andrew finally was able to buy the car he wanted. He made the tires screech as he pulled out from the auto dealer.

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10.8: Count-Noncount (Collective) Nouns

Nouns represent persons, places, things, and ideas. Nouns that name something in general, such as a *bridge*, are **common nouns**. Nouns that name specific things with titles, such as *The Golden Gate Bridge*, are called **proper nouns.** Proper nouns are always capitalized whereas common nouns follow regular capitalization rules (see "Capitalization"). Proper nouns are always one specific thing, so they are neither countable or noncount (collective). Common nouns, however, can either be **countable** (they can be pluralized, such as *bridge*) or **noncountable** (also known as collective) Noncount nouns are those that are always referred to as a whole, or collectively, such as *equipment*. *Equipment* could refer to one piece of equipment or many pieces of equipment, but it's just referred to as *equipment* and is never pluralized (--s or --es is never added to the end to indicate more than one).

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures, three sugars

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture, two teaspoons of sugar

Many other grammatical rules and structures depend on whether a noun is singular, plural, or noncount (collective), so it's important to have a good working understanding of this topic.

Count Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding *-s* or *--es* to the end of the word. Count nouns almost always take an article before them (or before the adjective that precedes the noun). See "Articles" on page 12.10. Only if you are writing or talking about something in general does a count noun not take an article before it.

Examples:

- I needed to purchase **the books** for my biology class before **the first day**.
- **A choice** was given to me: Pass the last essay or retake **the class** next semester.
- *College* is important to consider when thinking about one's future.

Noncount Nouns

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract things or ideas. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an idea or concept that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, research, softness, violence, and conduct.

Types of Noncount Nouns

The following table categorizes noncount nouns by type.

Type of Noncount Noun	Examples	Sentences
Foods	sugar, salt, lettuce, pepper, rice, coffee, tea	Add more sugar to my coffee please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap, equipment	The ice cream was covered in warm chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, love, information, violence, tranquility	The tranquility of the beach was relaxing.

Tip

Many abstract concepts end in "ness," "tion," "ance," or "ence."

Some other common noncount nouns you will likely encounter in college or business:

analysis business change composition consumption cost demand dependence electricity energy enough industry inflation information

investment jargon likelihood management mitigation money oil output potential probability production property prosperity research

risk time uncertainty reliance scope sequence supply tradework

Note

Sometimes nouns can be used as adjectives to describe another noun (example: investment products – "investment" describes the type of products). When a noun is acting as an adjective, never put an "s" on the end of it.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of *traffic* on the way home was terrible.
2. *Forgiveness* is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic *apples* I bought.
4. I prefer film *cameras* instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is *history*.
6. "*Freedom* is just another word for nothing left to lose."

Exercise 2

On a separate piece of paper, edit the following paragraph for any mistakes with count and noncount noun usage.

Research can be challenging. It takes a long times. First you have to create brainstorm list or mind maps to figure out what you know about the topic and how it relates to other issue. I chose the topic of violent and how it affects our life. After you think of a central question, you then have to read all the researches about the various topics. Then you have decide what is important in what you read and decide what you have to say about that subtopic. Then you have to organize everythings, decide about what you will quote and what paraphrase you will use. Finally, all of the citations has to be correct.

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10.9: Articles

If English is not your first language and depending on your first language, articles can be one of the last grammar items in English that begin to come "naturally." This is because many languages don't have articles as noun markers.

There are two different types of articles, definite and indefinite.

The word ***the*** is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, **the** woman refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article ***the*** is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words ***a*** and ***an*** are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, a woman refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article ***a*** or ***an*** is used before a singular count noun only.

Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An)

- I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
- I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)
- I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
- I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)
- **The** research conducted recently shows an increase in global average temperatures. (noncount/collective, refers to specific research)

Three Article Rules – Reminders

The following rules will help to determine when and what kind of article needs to be used.

Rule 1: A singular count noun needs an article or a determiner (see "Count/Noncount Nouns"). Choose **a** or **an** if the noun is indefinite. Choose **the** if the noun is definite

Rule 2: A plural or non-count noun does not take an article unless the plural or non-count noun is definite.

Rule 3: For indefinite articles, use "a" before nouns that begin with consonant sounds but "an" before nouns that begin with vowel sounds.

Tip:

Say the noun aloud to determine whether it should take "**a**" or "**an**." Some words, such as eucalyptus, begin with a letter that is a vowel, but the first sound you make is actually a consonant sound (y with a schwa). This rarely, if ever, happens with a word that begins with a consonant.



Figure: Unsplash

It is common to hear people say or write "an historical." This is incorrect in American English because we pronounce the hard "h" sound when we say historical. So in the U.S., "**a**" should be used before historical. In places where the "h" is silent so the first sound is a short "i," "**an**" should be used. This video explains it further.



Video 10.9.1

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _____
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

? Exercise 2

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Articles in Proper Nouns

Sometimes articles can be confusing when they are used as part of a Proper Noun. Why would an article (especially the definite article, **the**), be used when the title of a proper noun already indicates a specific one. The answer to this is complicated. Many times, when what would normally be a common noun is the last word in a proper noun, "the" is used as part of the proper noun. Here are some examples:

- the Empire State Building
- the Chrysler Building
- the Eiffel Tower
- the Golden Gate Bridge
- the United States (or the U.S.)

Table 12.10 -- Categories of Proper Nouns that Take "the"

Category	Example
Government bodies	the Congress, the Senate
Historical periods	the Restoration, the Pleistocene era

Religious texts	the Talmud, the Quran, the Bible
Landmarks	the Eiffel Tower, the Grand Canyon
Large bodies of water	the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea
Points on the globe	the Equator, the South Pole
Deserts, forests, gulfs, peninsulas, and mountain rangers	the Sierra Nevadas, the Gobi Desert

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10.10: Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronouns represent nouns, and there are eight types of pronouns: personal, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, possessive, reciprocal, relative, and reflexive. That's a lot to remember. The following table gives some examples of each type, as well as the pronoun functions as a subject, object, or both (some pronouns can only be used as a subject or an object).

Table 12.11.1 -- Pronoun Types

Pronoun Type	Subject	Object
Personal pronouns	he, she, they	him, her, them
Demonstrative pronouns	this, these	them
Interrogative pronouns	who, which	
Indefinite pronouns	none, several, some	
Possessive pronouns	his, your, whose	
Reciprocal pronouns		each other, one another
Relative pronouns	which, where, that, who, whose,	whom
Reflexive pronouns		itself, himself, yourself

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because Afrah is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. She refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A.* Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

- *She* refers to *Lani*.
- *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

- *Him* refers to Jeremy.
- *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

- *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
- *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun should also be singular; however, "they" is acceptable to refer to a person of undetermined or unassumed gender.*

Incorrect: The *man* (sing.) could not pick up his dry cleaning because *they* (plur.) didn't have a receipt.
Correct: The *man* (sing.) could not pick up his try cleaning because *he* (sing.) did not have a receipt.
Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

*One way to get around problems with agreement in number is to pluralize the antecedent (if possible) and use *"they" as the pronoun.*

Table 12.11.2 -- Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

? Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Table 12.11.3 -- Common Indefinite Pronouns

all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Collective Noun Agreement

Collective nouns (also known as noncount nouns -- see Chapter 12.8) are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Table 12.11.4 -- Common Collective Nouns

audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society

committee	group	team
company	jury	tribe

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.
Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

? Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Pronouns as Subjects or Objects

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition. Remember that an object pronoun should never come at the beginning of a sentence.

Table 12.11.5 -- Subject/Object Pronouns

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Jane moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a prounoun can also be the object of a preposition, just as a noun is.

- Near *them*, the children played.
- My mother stood between *us*.

Compound Subjects and Objects

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction that, together, function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *Me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about *Janice and I.*

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Note

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.

   _____

2. She and him have decided to sell their house.

   _____

3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

   _____

4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.

   _____

5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

   _____

6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

   _____

7. New Year’s Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

   _____

8. You exercise much more often than me.

   _____

9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

   _____

10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

    _____

Who versus *Whom*

Who or *whoever* is always act as subjects. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head by making it into a statement using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use *whom*.

Exercise 4

*Complete the following sentences by adding **who** or **whom**. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.*

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Unclear Pronoun Reference



Image by Bruno Nascimento on Unsplash.

Clear pronoun reference is necessary for strong writing. We've already talked about clear pronouns reference earlier in the stylistic chapter (Chapter 11), but it's worth repeating here. There are many instances in which the noun a pronoun refers to is unclear. This problem can be because the noun hasn't yet been mentioned, the pronoun refers back to something much earlier, you are alternating between the action of two characters, or the pronoun is indefinite and so a noun needs to be added for clarity. Below are some examples.

- As ***he*** inched toward the closet door, *Jason* became increasingly nervous because ***he*** didn't know what ***he*** would find.
- As *Jason* inched toward the closet door, he became increasingly nervous because he didn't know what he would find.

In this case, the vagueness only occurs at the beginning of the sentence until the reader reads "Jason." Then the reader knows who all of the "he's" are in this sentence. But having the first pronoun at the beginning of the sentence forces the reader to go back to the beginning -- however briefly -- to confirm what Jason did. The other uses of "he" are clear. Having a pronoun appear before the noun it represents is not ideal. However given the amount of "he" in the sentence, restructuring the sentence complete might be best.

- *Ella and Chris* went to the *outlet mall* to shop and enjoy *a movie*. After much debate, ***they*** decided to watch the latest *superhero flick*. They ate some *popcorn* and *JuJuBees*, and washed that down with some *soda*. ***It*** was exciting.
- *Ella and Chris* went to the *outlet mall* to shop and enjoy a *movie.* After much debate, ***they*** decided to watch the latest *superhero flick.* They ate some *popcorn* and *JuJuBees*, and washed that down with some soda. The afternoon was exciting.

In this case, more than one noun that appears in the earlier sentences could be exciting, or the pronoun, "it" could refer to the whole afternoon. **Pronouns must refer back to the closest noun before that is of the same type.** Because "it" refers to an object or idea, "it" could refer to anything Ella and Chris ate or drank, the movie itself, the mall, or the whole experience. The pronoun reference is unclear. "They" is fine because the only nouns "they" could refer to, given that "they" is plural, are Ella and Chris.

- Macbeth and Banquo fought each other, and as he drew his sword, he ran for his life.
- Macbeth and Banquo fought each other, and as Macbeth drew his sword, Banquo ran for his life.

Please note: this scene never happened in *Macbeth.* However, if it had, we would not know who drew his sword nor who ran for his life. In this case, it's best to use the nouns so that who did what is clear.

- *Voters* went to the *polls* on Tuesday. ***Some*** of ***them*** stopped working, however.
- *Voters* went to the *polls* on Tuesday. ***Some*** of *the polling stations* stopped working, however.

Because both nouns are plural, and "some of them" refers to a few of a group, the pronouns could refer to either the voters, themselves, or the polling stations. We don't know if some of the voters didn't work because they were going to vote or whether some of the polling stations stopped working, the latter of which would be a big problem. In this case, it's best to state the noun rather than use a prnoun.

? Exercise 5

Rewrite the following sentences to the best of your ability to make the pronoun reference clear.

1. Although the ice cream and sauce were delicious, Candy worried about how many calories it had.
2. Stunned by the beauty of the Northern Lights, Vikram decided to stay there a week longer for his vacation.
3. Daffodils, tulips, and anemones are all beautiful spring flowers, and they were Tanya's favorites.
4. This is where the meeting of the minds can occur.
5. Noor was overwhelmed by all of the things for sale at the warehouse store. There was food, clothing, books, electronics, restaurant supplies, and even auto supplies. She didn't know where to start, but she knew she wanted some.
6. The grains of sand and shells each felt rough against her feet, but they felt good, too, until she cut herself on it.

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10.11: Apostrophes- Posession and Contractions

Apostrophes

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.



Video 10.11.1

Possession

An apostrophe plus the letter "*s*" ('s) indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add apostrophe plus s (’s).

- **Jen’s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.
- The **dog’s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.
- **Jess’s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

- A plural noun that ends in *s*: The drummers’ sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.
- Plural noun that does not end in *s*: The people’s votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing. Many writing instructors prefer that students not use contractions for their formal essays. Part of the reason is tone, and part of the reason is that using them can make proofreading for proper verb usage more difficult.

I **do not** like ice cream.

I **don’t** like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the "*o*" in not has been left out, and the two words are combined with no space.

We will see you later.

We’ll see you later.

Look at Table 12.12.1, below, for some examples of commonly used contractions.

Table 12.12.1 -- Commonly Used Contractions

aren't	are not
can't	cannot

doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she'll	she will
she's	she is
there's	there is
they'll	they will
who's	who is
you'll	you will

Tip

Be careful not to confuse it’s with its. It’s is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun. It’s cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.) The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.) When in doubt, substitute the words "it is" in a sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it’s.

Table 12.12.2 -- Commonly Confused Contraction Spellings

Commonly Confused Contraction/Possessive Spellings	
Contraction	**Possessive**
it's (it is)	its (owned by "it")
who's (who is)	whose (owned by "who?")
there's (there is)	theirs (owned by them)



Figure: Unsplash

Don't use apostrophes with decades. Just add an "*s*".

Incorrect: Modern rock was popular in the *1980's.*

Correct: Modern rock was popular in the *1980s.*

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. “What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.”

2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?
7. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
8. My sisters wife will make the arrangements.
9. Shes a great party organizer.

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- When to use apostrophes. **Authored by:** Laura McClure. **Located at:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My6oGvkHnfY. **License:** *All Rights Reserved.* **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License.

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10.12: Subject-Verb Agreement

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

What Is Agreement?

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see Chapter 12.10.
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see sections 12.2, 12.5, and 12.8. Notice that in the sentences below, the simple present tense is used. Many times, subject-verb agreement mistakes are made in this verb tense.

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.
Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Agreement for Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in *-s*. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in *-s*. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

****Use simple present tense when writing about universal truths, texts, and movies.****

Table 12.13.1 -- Regular Verbs

Regular Verbs			
	Past	**Present**	**Future**
Simple			
First person	I walked	I walk	I will walk
Second person	You walked	You walk	You will walk
Third person singular	It walked	It walks	It will walk
Third person plural	They walked	They walk	They will walk
Perfect			
First person	I had walked	I have walked	I will have walked
Second person	You had walked	You have walked	You will have walked
Third person singular	He had walked	He has walked	He will have walked
Third person plural	They had walked	They have walked	They will have walked
Progressive			
First person	I was walking	I am walking	I will be walking

Second person	You were walking	You are walking	You will be walking
Third person singular	He was walking	He is walking	He will be walking
Third person plural	They were walking	They are walking	They will be walking
Perfect Progressive			
First person	I had been walking	I have been walking	I will have been walking
Second person	You had been walking	You have been walking	You will have been walking
Third person singular	He had been walking	He has been walking	He will have been walking
Third person plural	They had been walking	They have been walking	They will have been walking

? Exercise 1

In the following sentences, choose the correct form of the verb (in parentheses) depending upon whether the subject is first, second, or third person singular or plural.

1. She _____ to work every day. (drive, simple present)
2. They _____ to call their parents to ask permission to stay out a little later. (remember, simple past)
3. Joannie and Shari _____ for the ride-share to arrive. (wait, simple present)
4. I _____ the house before company arrived. (clean, simple past)
5. You _____ the new food; believe me! (like, simple future)
6. Toddlers _____ dirt pretty often. (eat, simple present)

Agreement for Irregular Verbs

The "to be" verbs are the most common verbs in the English language. However, they are also irregular when it comes to subject-verb agreement.

"To be" verbs only carry simple past, present, and future tenses.

Table 12.13.2 -- Agreement for the "to be" Verbs

"To Be" Verbs			
	Past	**Present**	**Future**
First person	I was	I am	I will be
Second person	You were	You are	You will be
Third person singular	It was	It is	It will be
Third person plural	There were	They are	They will be

? Exercise 2

*Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of **be, have,** or **do** so that the subject-verb agreement is correct. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.*

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.

8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement



Video 10.12.1

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when:

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*; or
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.
Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *wants* to eat at that restaurant.
Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.
Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.
Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.
Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.
Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The student with the best grades *wins* the academic awards.*
The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.

*Notice that the noun before the verb is plural, but because that word, "grades," is the object of the preposition, not the subject in the sentence. So the verb "wins" does not need to agree with "grades," it needs to agree with "student."

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
The representatives who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Table 12.13.3 -- Indefinite Pronoun Agreement

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things to be one singular unit. Because collective (noncount) nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my wallet!
There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet *is* here!
Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the people you are related to?
When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight.

Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

   _____

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

   _____

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

   _____

4. My family are moving to California.

   _____

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

   _____

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

   _____

7. Which room is bigger?

   _____

8. When are the movie going to start?

_____

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

_____

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

_____

Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Writing at Work



Image

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

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10.13: Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.

2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in *-ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.

5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

? Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by adding an adjective or adverb. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick _____ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His _____ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have _____ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism _____, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a _____ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke _____ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most _____ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a _____ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She _____ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise _____ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe watermelon.



Video 10.13.1

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.

2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.

- Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*. It is not a comparative.
- Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *-er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.

2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

- Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add *-est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in *-y*, change the *-y* to an *-i* and add *-est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko, too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Exercise 3

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

a. Denise has a (cheerful) _____ outlook on life than her husband.

b. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _____ cook in my family.

c. Lydia is the (thoughtful) _____ person I know.

d. Italy experienced the (bad) _____ heat wave in its history last year.

e. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _____ person I know, and I like that.

f. Dorian's drawing skills are (good) _____ this semester than last.

g. My handwriting is the (sloppy) _____ of all my classmates.

h. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _____ than it did last season.

i. Josie's pen writes (smooth) _____ than mine.

j. I felt (lucky) _____ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.



Figure: Unsplash

Irregular Words: *Good*, *Well*, *Bad*, and *Badly*

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

Table 12.14 -- Comparatives and Superlatives

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus *Well*

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus *Badly*

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and *Worse*

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

- Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.
- The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and *Worst*

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

- Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.
- Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Tip

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 4

*Write **good, well, bad,** or **badly** to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.*

1. Donna always felt _____ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _____ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _____ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _____ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _____ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _____ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _____.
8. Juan has a _____ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _____ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _____ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 5

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is _____ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music _____ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides _____ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the _____ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played _____ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar _____ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the _____ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is _____ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are _____ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the _____ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work 10.13.1

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

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10.14: Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time. Some prepositions, such as *about* and *of* can show a person's relation to an idea. Some preposition use is idiomatic, meaning that the usage is not based in a rule; rather, the usage is based in tradition.

In, At, and On

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.

Table 12.15.1: In

Preposition	**Time**	**Example**	**Place**	**Example**
in	year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
	month	in August	state	in California
	season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
	time of day (not with *night*)	in the afternoon		
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
			currency	in Yen
			language	in German

Table - On

Preposition	**Time**	**Example**	**Place**	**Example**
on*	day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
	date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
	specific days/dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
			communication	on the radio
			concerning	on magic

Table - At

Preposition	**Time**	**Example**	**Place**	**Example**
at	time	at five o’clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
	with *night*	at night	location	at Rooney’s Grill
	Degree	**Example**	**Other**	**Example**
	temperature	at 0 degrees Celcius	idiomatic	She is good at dancing

The table above also points out uses other than time and place.

? Exercise 1

*On a separate piece of paper, edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with **in, at**, and **on**.*

Dear Mrs. Salazar,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.

Sincerely,
Milani Davis

The table below has examples of the usage of other common prepositions.

Table 12.15.2 -- Common Preposition Usage

Preposition	Space	Time	Degree (measurement)	Other
about	*all around* The dog ran about the yard.	*approximately* It is about 1:00 p.m.	*approximately* It is about 70 degrees Farenheit.	*concerning* This is a book about mathematics.
against	*contact* I plywood leaned against the house.	*conflict* I was against what Karen wanted to do.	*conflict* The fight was five against three.	*internal* He was taken against his will.
				external The team won against all odds.
above	*higher than* The tree towers above the house.		*more than* The temperature is above freezing.	*idiomatic* She is above reproach. He is above suspicion.
around	*state* The fence is around the dog run.	*approximately* I scored around 1250 on the SAT.	*approximately* I rang around four miles before pooping out.	
	action The dogs ran around the dog park.			
before	*in front of* In the painting, the buildings were before the mountains.	*earlier than* Explorers reached the South Pole before astronauts reached the moon.		
below	*lower than* The submarine was below the surface of the water.		*less than* His test scores were below average.	
between	*at some point in relation to two entities* The ball was stuck between the garbage can and the fence.	*at some point between two times* They were going to meet up between 7 and 8 p.m.	*at some point between two measurements* I weight between 150 and 160 pounds.	*idiomatic* We an keep this secret between you and me, right?
by	*near* The cafe near the corner is the best.	*no later than* Be home for dinner by 5:30 p.m.	*duplication* The inchworm moved inch by inch.	*without help* I can do my work by myself.
			degree of failure The arrow missed the target by a mile.	*alone* He went shopping by himself.

for	*goal* We set out for Australia in our yacht.	*duration* We have been together for three years.	*exchange* I bought the top for $12.	*reason* People travel to France for the art.
	distance I drove for 500 miles.			*goal/purpose* We hunted for boar.
from	*a starting point* We ran the race from the beginning to the end.	*duration* I worked from 8 to 5:30.	*beginning of range* The temperature tomorrow will range from 48 to 58 degrees.	*source* The Egyptians made paper from papyrus.
	origin I moved here from Chicago.			*cause* The ground was charred from fire.
of	*names of geographic locations or institutions* I plan to transfer to the University of California.	*before* I woke up at a quarter of six.	*portion* I would like a cup of tea.	*possessive* A friend of mine recently went on the trip of a lifetime.
				source The table was made of metal.
over	*above* She wore a shawl over her shoulders.	*spanning time* Over the break, I did a thorough house cleaning.	*more than* I had to wait more than one-half hour for my doctor.	*communication* I read my news over the Internet.
	action above The pole vaulter made it over the pole.			
through	*penetrate* The mountain lion snuck through the bushes.	*duration* Through the years, I've learned a few things.		*endurance* Through good times and bad, we make survive.
to	*direction* Kevin drove to the mountains.	*until* I slept to 7 a.m.	*amount* I will listen to the extent of my patience.	*accompany* I listened to the radio.
toward	*in the direction of* I walked toward the Northwest.	*near* It was toward 11 a.m. when things were stolen from my car.	*measurement* The snow began to melt as the temperature headed toward 40F.	*goal* People need to work together toward civil discourse.
under	*below* Moles burrow below the surface.	*less than* I will be there in under fifteen minutes	*less than* My dinner cost under $10.	*condition* She admitted to the crime under duress.
with	*alongside, near* The painting was hung parallel with window.	*together* I went with Amy to the movies.	*equal standing or ability* John kept the lead with Jordan.	*in regard to* I am happy with my purchase.
				manner They danced with style.

A beginner to prepositions may want to watch the following video, which shows the meaning of the words visually. This video mainly focuses on space and time meanings of prepositions.



Video 10.14.1

Prepositions after Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. In fact, some verbs require prepositions after them. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these prepositions cannot be separated from the verb.

Table 12.15.3 - Verbs + Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always **agrees with** me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I **apologize for** being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will **apply for** that job.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I **believe in** educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I **care about** the health of our oceans.
consist of	to be made up of certain things	My lunch **consists of** a turkey sandwich and an apple.
detract from	to make less appealing	The workload **detracts from** the salary that the job offers.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I **heard about** the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you **look after** my dog while I am on vacation?
part with	to give away or be separated from something	I **parted with** a bookshelf of books when I moved.
rely on	to depend on	I **rely on** my alarm clock going off in the morning.
substitute for	to replace something temporarily	The flour **substitutes for** cornstarch in the gravy recipe.
talk about	to discuss something	We will **talk about** the importance of recycling.sus
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will **speak to** his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will **wait for** my package to arrive.

Tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct preposition with the verb.

1. Charlotte does not _____ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to _____ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Herman said he was going to _____ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not _____ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I _____ (care about, agree with) the environment very much

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 12.15.4 - Adjectives + Prepositions

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
afraid of	to fear something	I am **afraid of** big dogs that bare their teeth.
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am **angry about** the oil spill in the ocean.
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was **confused about** the concepts presented in class.
content with	to be satisfied with	I am **content with** the grade in my math class.
to be dependent on	to be reliant on something	The ex-smoker was **dependent on** her oxygen tank to breathe.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was **disappointed in** my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was **dressed in** a pin-striped suit.
to be free from/or	not shackled to something someone finds burdensome	I was **free from** my obligations for the summer.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was **happy for** my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am **interested in** musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was **jealous of** her because she always went on vacation.
to be sorry for	to have pity or regret	I am **sorry for** the things I said.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am **thankful for** my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was **tired of** driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am **worried about** my father's health.

Note:

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition *at*:

- Good

She is really ***good at*** chess.

- Excellent

Henry is ***excellent at*** drawing.

- Brilliant

Mary Anne is ***brilliant at*** playing the violiin.

? Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition with adjective.

1. Meera was deeply _____ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was _____ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _____ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was _____ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _____ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

Idiomatic Preposition Usage

The following phrases -- many of them noun phrases -- are expressed in a particular way and should be memorized. There isn't a rule or particular that determines the preposition to use; thus, the whole phrase is an idiom and should be memorized together.

Table 12.15.5 -- Idiomatic Prepositions

Idiomatic Phrase	Example
in the end	**In the end**, the whole disagreement was a misunderstanding.
talked about (**not** talked *on*)	The president **talked about** current events.
in case of	**In case of** fire, break the glass.
in charge of	The principal was **in charge of** the high school.
in favor of	Most students were **in favor of** starting school at 9 a.m.
on account of	We were late **on account of** a broken down bus.*
on behalf of	We present this plaque **on behalf of** the city council.
in the course of	**In the course of** completing the project, we discovered some other problems.
in the habit of	I am **in the habit of** emailing people back within a day.
in the name of	Sue donated flowers **in the name of** her aunt, who had died.
on the advice of	I am quitting vaping **on the advice of** my doctor.
on the basis of	I am cancelling this subscription **on the basis of** cost.
on the strength of	The correlation was made **on the strength of** the data.

*Note that a noun or noun phrase must be used after *on account of* as the object of the preposition. Sometimes student try to follow this phrase with an entire sentence, which is not grammatically correct.

Prepositional Phrases

Most of the time, prepositions begin prepositional phrases, which give more information about something in a sentence. As mentioned above, sometimes the verb you use requires a prepositional phrase after the verb. The subject of a sentence can never be

the noun in a prepositional phrase. The subject is part of the core of the sentence, and the prepositional phrase is outside of that core. For more information , please see "Word Order and Sentence Structure" in section 12.2.

✔ Example 10.14.1

Subject verb preposition article noun(object of prep) infinitive gerund

Karen drove to the mountains to go skiing.

Sentence core prepositional phrase verbal phrase

Prepositions always must be followed by a noun in a prepositional phrase. Many times that noun will also be preceded by an article and/or an adjective.

? Exercise 4

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences. Do not underline any words that are not part of a prepositional phrase.

1. Under the moonlight, the coyotes howled and yipped.
2. I must finish my paper by Tuesday night.
3. I felt on top of the world when I learned I had one a prize!
4. Bill and Jordan thought they could play some basketball on Thursday after class.
5. Chihuahuas and pit bulls are popular dogs, but unfortunately, too many of them fill up animal shelters throughout the country.
6. Marta and Denise work toward understanding each others' points of view.

? Exercise 5

Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences. Do not underline any words that are not part of a prepositional phrase.

1. Monica told us about her trip.
2. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
3. The panther climbed up the tree.
4. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.
5. We stayed awake until dawn.

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10.15: Commas

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind. (Note -- the comma before "and" in a list is called an Oxford comma and is an optional style choice.)
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945, in San Francisco, California.
- **Modifying phrases:** Sam focused on the detailed brush work, consisting as it did of many tiny dots.



Video 10.15.1

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence (usually beginning with the subject) begins.

Example: Without spoiling the surprise**,** we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main clause. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma still follows the introductory word.

Example: Ironically**,** she already had plans for that day.

? Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item. Also, the comma before the and is optional.

Examples

- We'll need to get flour**,** tomatoes**,** and cheese at the store.
- The pizza will be topped with olives**,** peppers**,** and pineapple chunks.
- We could add some bacon, prosciutto, etc.

✔ Writing at Work

Many workplaces have style guides. Whether you place a comma before the "and" before the last item in a list of items depends on the style guide your workplace uses. Note that many people are picky about the use of the "Oxford comma," but it really is a style choice. Howvever, if you end a list of items with "etc." to indicate other items that aren't mentioned, always use a comma before "etc." When writing at work, follow the style guide your workplace uses regarding whether to use a comma in this circumstance.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Examples

- It was a bright**,** windy**,** clear day.
- Our kite glowed red**,** yellow**,** and blue in the morning sunlight.

? Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are used to join two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by one of the coordinating conjunctions: *for*, *and*, *not*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. For more information and practice, see "Coordination and Subordination" in Chapter 11. Note that a comma is not used before conjunctions that join a phrase to an independent clause.

Commas joining two independent clauses:

- He missed class today**,** and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.
- He says his fever is gone**,** but he is still very tired.

No comma needed when joining a phrase to a clause:

- He will take one more day off of school and work to recover.

? Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

_____

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

_____

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

_____

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

_____

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

_____

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

_____

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

_____

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

_____

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

_____

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

_____

Commas before and after Modifying Words and Phrases

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase. This may be a parenthetical thought (an aside) or a modifying phrase. These types of words and phrases can appear at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Examples:

- If you can believe it**,** people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
- Luckily**,** some people questioned that theory.

When modifying phrases come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

- An Italian astronomer**,** Galileo**,** proved that Earth orbited the sun.
- We have known**,** for hundreds of years now**,** that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

? Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the modifying phrases from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Examples:

- The letter is postmarked May 4**,** 2001.
- Her birthday is May 5.
- He visited the country in July 2009.
- I registered for the conference on March 7**,** 2010**,** so we should get our tickets soon.

Also use commas when writing addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Examples:

- We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane**,** Hope**,** Missouri 70832.
- After moving to Boston**,** Massachusetts**,** Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When writing an e-mail or a letter, add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. Also include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

> Hello**,**
> I would like more information about your job posting.
> Thank you**,**
> Anita Al-Sayf
>
> Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf**,**
> Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
> Sincerely**,**
> Jack Fromont

? Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you

Alexa

? Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.

2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

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10.16: Semicolons, Colons, Question Marks, and Exclamation Marks

Semicolons

In addition to periods and commas, another punctuation mark that you will encounter (though less often) is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways but in generally it can only be used where a period could be used. However, a semicolon functions differently than a period or a comma. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but also more of a relationship between the two ideas. Think of it more as a connector than a separator. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath, just like a period.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

You can use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses without a coordinating or subordinating conjunction. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence. However, semicolons aren't used often, so use this choice only occasionally, such as when the logic that holds two ideas together is so obvious that it doesn't need to be indicated with a coordinator or subordinator. Another place to use a semicolon is when you use a transitional adverb to show the relationship between two ideas.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**;** appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**.** Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview**,** appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Correct: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview; however, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Correct but somewhat choppy: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview. However, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Incorrect: I felt I should wear formal clothes to the interview, however, the interview was on a Friday when people dress more casually.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey**;** green, brown, and black**;** or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip:

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions, such as *and*, or, and *but.*



Video 10.16.1

? Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write "OK."

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes that are introduced by a complete sentence, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

- Dear Hiring Manager:
- To: Human Resources
- From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

- The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
- I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like "such as" or "for example."

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip:

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect with phrase: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Correct with phrase: The recipe is simple: tomato, basil, and avocado.



Video 10.16.1

? Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write "OK."

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.
3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.
4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.
5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.
6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.
7. The boss’s message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.
8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Walker.
9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”
10. Trust me I have done this before.

Question Marks

A question mark (?) should end a question. But sometimes we are so used to putting periods at the ends of our sentence, that in the heat of writing an essay, we accidentally place periods at the ends of questions as well. And sometimes, the construction of a sentence can make it unclear whether the sentence is a question or not, so we may just default to using the period. This section (and the video) explain when to use a question mark in the more sophisticated and formal writing you do in college.

Direct Questions

If a sentence is constructed in the form of a question, it usually begins with a question word, such as *is*, *are*, *did*, *does*, *do*, *where*, *who*, *why*, *when*, *what*, *was*, *were*, *would*, *could*, or *how.* If a sentence begins with one of these words, it should end with a question mark. (If you have a question about the construction of questions -- or interrogative sentences -- see "Questions and Negative Statements" in section 12.3.

Examples:

- Why was Galileo put in jail after he declared the earth revolved around the sun?
- Who was at the party?
- Did you get all of your homework done before you went?

Tag Questions

Tag questions are questions that are "tagged on" to a declarative statement. It may be unclear whether to place a question mark at the end of these sentences, but you should because the question ends the sentence. These types of questions are less likely to appear in formal expository writing but may very well appear in creative writing, particularly in dialog.

Examples:

- You are working during summer break, aren't you?
- I can't remember what I came into this room for. It was to gather laundry, wasn't it?

Rhetorical and Hypothetical Questions

Rhetorical and hypothetical questions are much more likely to appear in expository writing. Rhetorical questions are used to draw in a reader to a main idea or to indirectly address the reader while transitioning to a new idea. You don't expect anyone to actually answer a rhetorical question (except for maybe you at the end of your essay). Hypothetical questions give an example that hasn't actually happened. Rhetorical and hypothetical questions should have question marks at the end.

Examples:

- How much longer can we ignore the effects of climate change?
- Can't we all just get along?
- Why must countries fight with each other?
- If I were to move to the Bay Area, would my pay support my lifestyle?

String of Questions

This is when additional questions are added onto a direct question. In writing, these would generally appear in dialog. Because of this more casual and, perhaps, artful situation, you have a little more leeway with capitalization. However, you would want to place a question mark at the end of each additional question.

Example:

May I sleep overnight at Kim's? Can I stay until 10 p.m.? Until 9?

Indirect Questions

Many times indirect questions begin with the words "I wonder." They do not begin with question words. Because of this, and because they don't follow a question sentence structure, they should not take question marks at the end. They are really just declarative statements about questions, so they should take a period at the end.

Examples:

- I wonder why people can't solve their problems in a constructive manner.
- Sierra wondered what college she would be accepted to.

Direct-Indirect Questions

In this type of question, the sentence begins with a declarative statement but ends with a direct question. Because they end with direct questions, the sentences should end ith question marks.

Examples:

- Donuts are delicious, so why do they have to be so bad for you?
- The question is, are we going to get there on time?



Video 10.16.1

? Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraph for question marks according to the above guidelines.

Eight-year-old Johnny was reading a book about dinosaurs, and it brought up so many questions in his head. He wondered, what is the biggest dinosaur. How did dinosaurs fly? How is it that there could be land, sea, and air dinosaurs. They all seemed to be similar whereas the animals we have now all seem so different. He hoped he could get his parents to go on a vacation to go dinosaur bone digging in Idaho. He wondered if his parents would say yes. Was it too much to ask. Johnny decided to read some more before asking his parents.

Exclamation Marks

Exclamation marks show excitement or emphasize emotion. In effect, they show tone of voice, which can be difficult to convey in writing. Have you ever written a communication -- especially a text or an email -- in which your tone was misunderstood? This can happen easily when using sarcasm. Although exclamation marks don't necessarily convey sarcasm, they can be used to indicate that tone of voice. A use that creates emphasis would be with imperative (command) sentences, in which someone is emphasizing loudly (perhaps yelling) that they really want someone to do something. More often they indicate excitement. Exclamation marks are rare in expository and college writing, which is more on the formal and less emotional side. Exclamation marks are used more often in personal communications and sometimes advertising.

Examples:

- This is a fantastic dessert!
- Wow! That was an amazing play!
- Get out of the way!

✔ Writing at Work

Be careful when using exclamation points at work, even in instant messages and email. In the workplace, exclamation marks can be seen as too casual or as unprofessional. Never use them in a formal business letter, but -- depending on your audience, message, and purpose, you may use them occasionally in a casual email or instant message to convey enthusiasm (see "Rhetorical Analysis" in Chapter 2.7). It's best to avoid sarcasm at work, so don't use exclamation marks in an "ironic" way.

All of this assumes, of course, that you are not writing marketing content at work. Such writing is more like creative writing, so it is possible you would use exclamation marks in this context.

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10.17: Clause Joining and Punctuation

The Three Families of Joining Words

There are three families of joining words: coordinators, subordinators, and transitional adverbs. Coordinators can join phrases (not complete ideas with both a subject and verb) or clauses (complete ideas). Subordinators and transitional adverbs only join clauses. Each type of joining word takes different punctuation, and sometimes the punctuation depends on where the joining word appears in the sentence. This is part of the reason why punctuation can be so confusing!

Below is a table of common joining words. The logical relationship column represents what logical relationship the coordinator, subordinator, or transitional adverb represents, so when joining two complete ideas, you need to think about how those ideas relate to each other. After the table you will see the punctuation rules for each type.

Table 12.18 -- The Three Families of Joining Words

Logical Relationship	Coordinators (FANBOYS)	Subordinators	Transitional Adverbs
	(Can join two clauses or phrases)	(Can join two clauses)	(Can join two clauses)
Addition	and		additionally also further furthermore moreover similarly
Cause	for	as because since	
Choice/alternative	nor or		alternatively on the other hand conversely
Condition		if provided that unless	otherwise
Contrast	but yet	although even if even though though whereas while	alternatively conversely however instead nevertheless nonetheless otherwise on the other hand rather still
Effect/result	so	in order to (that) in that so that	as a result consequently hence therefore thus
Time		before after	afterward first next

Coordinators

Coordinators can join two clauses or two phrases. There are only seven coordinators: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So. You can remember them by this acronym:

F A N B O Y S

How to punctuate coordinators:

Only use a comma if you are using a coordinator to join two clauses. No commas is needed at all if you are joining two phrases. Here are some examples with brackets around the clauses and phrases.

[I usually am afraid of dogs]**, but** [I love Rex]. (Joining two *clauses*)

[Roses are red]**, and** [violets are blue]. (Joining two *clauses*)

[The prickly rose] **and** [the lengthy brambles] scratched my skin. (Joining two *phrases*)

The following is a very tricky example:

{Both [dogs'] **and** [cats'] instincts have been crippled by humans' need to make these animals dependent upon us}**, so** {they rely on us for [their every need] **and** even for [emotional satisfaction]}. (Joining 2 *phrases, 2 clauses, 2 phrases)*

Watch Out! Students tend to overuse "and" and "but," yet they neglect the other coordinators that may more effectively show the relationship between their ideas.

? Exercise 1

Join the following sentence pairs with a ***coordinating conjunction*** *that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy went to the animal shelter. She wanted a new dog.
2. She loved her previous dog. He had passed away.
3. She had mourned for a while. Now she was ready for a new pet.
4. She played with a Yorkie. She played with a Terrier mix.
5. She couldn't decide whether to adopt a big dog. She couldn't deicde whether to adopt a smaller dog.
6. They were both so sweet. She had to make a choice.
7. In the end, she decided on the Terrier mix. He seemed like a perfect mix of being snuggly, loving, and protective.

Subordinators

Subordinators de-emphasize the clause they are attached to and emphasize the other clause. Only use a comma between the clauses when the sentence begins with a subordinator. If the subordinator is in the middle of the sentence, don't use any punctuation with it.

How to punctuate subordinators:

> **Although** [I usually am afraid of dogs], [I love Rex].

In this case, the subordinator "although" is joining two clauses by being in front of them both. It de-emphasizes the fact that the writer is usually afraid of dogs because that is the clause the subordinator begins. A comma is placed between the two clauses because the subordinator is at the beginning of the sentence.

> [I love Rex] **although** [I usually am afraid of dogs].

Here, the subordinator "although" can also join two clauses by being between them although it is still at the beginning of the clause it de-emphasizes. No comma separates the two clauses.

Another example

> **Because** [I was hungry], [I ate a sandwich].
>
> [I ate a sandwich] **because** [I was hungry].

To repeat: Subordinators can join two clauses by being in front of both or by being in between them. If the *subordinator is in front,* **the commas separates the two clauses.** If the *subordinator is in the middle*, **no commas is needed.** Subordinators can never appear at the end of a sentence.

? Exercise 2

*Join the following sentence pairs with a **subordinating conjunction** that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy brought home her new dog, Chumley. She went to the store to get supplies.
2. The pet store allowed dogs in the store. Darcy brough Chumley with her.
3. Chumley was a little overwhelmed with the new situation. He became very quiet and put his tail between his legs.
4. Darcy though he might need to go potty. He might be afraid.
5. She didn't want to bring Chumley back to the car. She thought doing so might scare him.
6. Darcy purchased only the supplies they reall needed. They went home to get settled.

Transitional Adverbs

Transitional adverbs indicate logical relationships between clauses but -- unlike coordinators and subordinators -- can move around and create various effects in the sentence.

Transitional adverbs always take some kind of punctuation *after* them. This is how to punctuate transitional adverbs:

- [Most dogs scare me]. **However**, [Rex is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a period. The second clauses begins with the transitional adverb, which is capitalized and has a comma after it.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; **however,** [Rex is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The second clause begins with the transitional adverb, which is lower case and has a comma after it.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; [Rex, **however,** is an exception].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The transitional adverb interrupts the second clause and has commas around it to emphasize the contrast.)

- [Most dogs scare me]; [Rex is an exception, **however**].

(The first clause ends with a semi-colon. The transitional adverb appears at the end of the sentence with a comma before it and a period after it. Placing the transitional adverb at the end of the sentence de-emphasizes the contrast.

In these examples, notice that the transition word could be placed in several different places in the second clause. *The ability to move around and still sound right is how you know it is a transition word!* You can't do this with coordinators or subordinators.

Notice that when a transition word *begins the second clause*, **the punctuation before the transition word is either a semi-colon or a period.** If the transition word *is in the middle of a clause*, **commas surround the transition word.** If the transition word is *at the end of the second clause*, **a comma comes before it and a period after.**

? Exercise 3

*Join the following sentence pairs with a **transitional adverb** that represents the correct logic, and punctuate the new sentence correctly. Please do this on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Darcy decided to take Chumley to training. She wasn't sure what level of class they should attend.
2. He knew the commands "sit," "stay," and "heel." He did not know how to walk by other dogs politely.
3. She had not worked with Chumley. She had taken classes with her previous dog.
4. She explained this to the SPCA representative, who could not really observe Chumley in action. The representative recommended taking the beginning class.
5. Chumley and Darcy's first class went well. They decided to continue and ultimately finished the course.

? Exercise 4

In the following paragraph, punctuate the various types of joining words correctly.

> After finishing the first dog/people training course at the SPCA Darcy decided to sign up Chumley for the next level class, which required more socialization. Darcy knew this would be good experience for Chumley, because he growled at other dogs when she took him on walks. Because of this she started walking across the street whenever she saw another dog approoach. As a result Chumley received less socialization. She was worried about whether the strategies from class would work on the other hand if she didn't bring him to the class his behavior would not get better because he could only learn with other dogs around him. The first session did not go well therefore the instructor asked Darcy and Chumley to work one-on-one with a trainer. Although, Darcy knew this would be more expensive, she figured it was kind of like having a child: sometimes you have to pay for things you'd rather not pay for. In the end, it would be the best for both of them.

Contrast, Concession, and Emphasis

Contrast: To emphasize the difference between two things

Concession: The act of yielding a point or a fact in an argument

The difference between contrast and concession is a matter of purpose. Think of a line or a range made up of intention (or your purpose for writing). On the left side of that line is explanation. On the other end of the range is "convincing." If you are just trying to explain the difference between two valid thoughts, you are contrasting them (although the second item listed will receive more emphasis). However, if you are showing the difference between the two in order to convince someone that one is better than the other, you show not only that they are different, and perhaps both valid, but that one is better for some reason. In this case, you would join the two ideas by using a concessive joiner, such as those presented below.

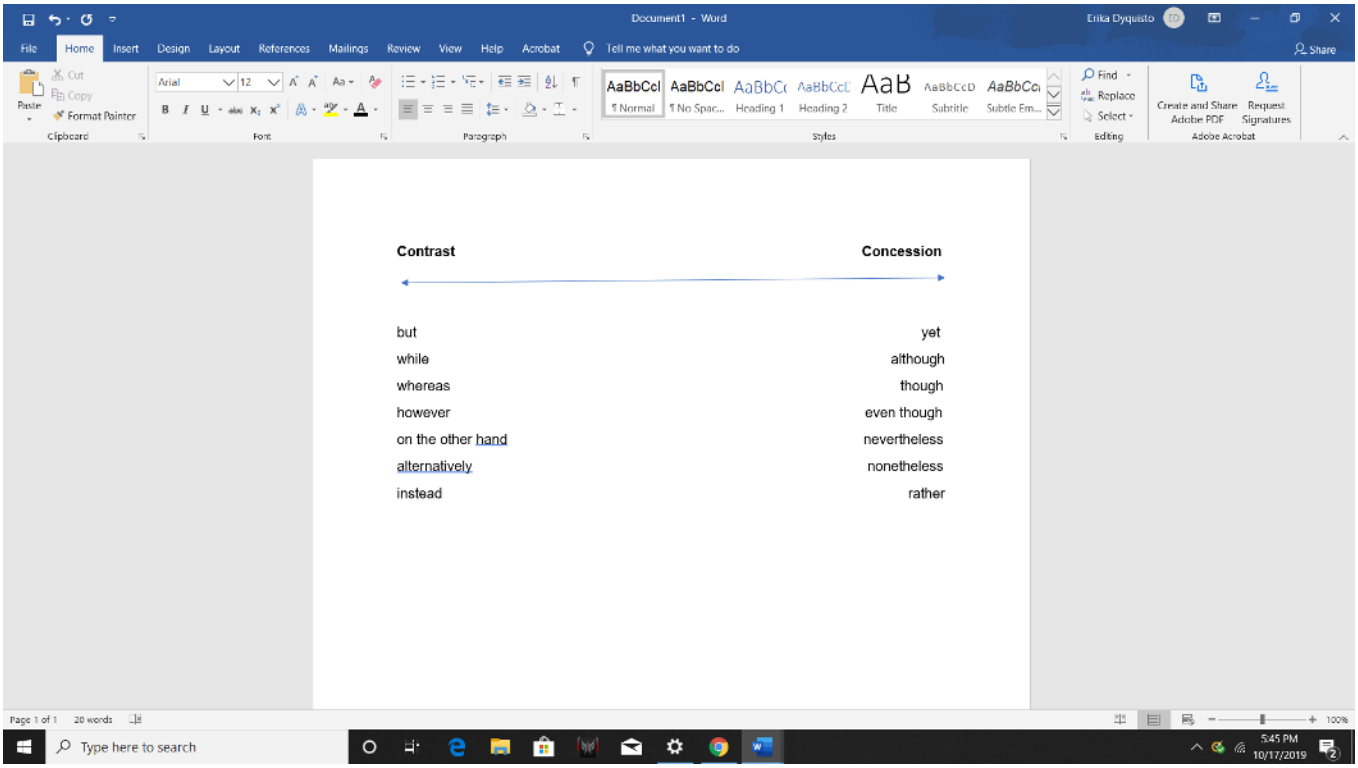


Figure: by Erika Dyquisto

When using coordinators and transitional adverbs, whichever clause is listed second is emphasized. When using subordinators, whichever clause the subordinator is NOT attached to is emphasized. So, when trying to join two clauses to emphasize one over the other, you need to consider whether you are contrasting or conceding and what type of word you are using to join the clauses. That will help determine the placement of the clause you emphasize.

? Exercise 5

On a separate piece of paper, join the following sentences by adding an appropriate joining word and, if necessary, rewriting so the order emphasizes what you are asked to emphasize.

1. The word “run” can be a noun or a verb; “run” is a verb when it is showing an action. “Run” is a noun when it refers to something dripping down, like paint.

(Show contrast and emphasize the second sentence.)

2. Some students prefer to work in groups. Others prefer to work solo.

(Show contrast and emphasize the first sentence.)

3. Some people still argue about whether climate changes are caused by humans. Others are trying to plan for the future assuming that climate change is inevitable.

(Show concession emphasizing the second sentence.)

4. Commercial and industrial users with on-site energy systems do not rely on the utility grid and distant power plants. An on-site power system requires an upfront investment of at least $4 million.

(Show concession emphasizing the first sentence.)

5. Gene editing technology has enormous potential to cure genetic diseases. Such technologies could change the genetic blueprint that will be passed on to future generations.

(Show contrast emphasizing the sentence you choose to emphasize – underline the sentence you choose to emphasize.)

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10.18: Extra Punctuation Practice

Run-Ons and Fragments

? Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931 _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

Commas and Other Punctuation

? Exercise 2

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

Commas

a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
f. The photography the catering and the music will all be done by friends.

Semicolons

a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons and Quotation Marks

a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable

d. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."
e. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.
f. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Parentheses

a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.
b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

Identifying and Correcting Punctuation Errors

? Exercise 3

Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
i. Arent gardens wonderful?
j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

? Exercise 4

The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don’t have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

? Exercise 5

Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence. Then compare your edits with a partner.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

? Exercise 6

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

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10.19: Run-On Sentences and Fragments

Run-on Sentences

A *run-on* sentence is a sentence with more than one clause and has not be properly punctuated. It also may include too much information for the reader to take in. One type of run-on that you've probably heard of is the *comma splice*, in which two independent clauses are joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*, etc.).

Let's look at a few examples of run-on sentences:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part it's a lot easier after that. (This sentence is missing punctuation.)
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information, it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals. (This sentence doesn't have the right type of punctuation.)
- She loves skiing but he doesn't. (This sentence doesn't have the right type of punctuation.)

All three of these have two independent clauses. Each clause should be separated from another with a period, a semicolon, or a comma and a coordinating conjunction:

- Often, choosing a topic for a paper is the hardest part. It's a lot easier after that.
- Sometimes, books do not have the most complete information; it is a good idea then to look for articles in specialized periodicals.
- She loves skiing, but he doesn't.

Note: Not every long sentence is a run-on sentence. For example, look at this quote from *The Great Gastby*:

Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

If you look at the punctuation, you'll see that this quote is a single sentence. F. Scott Fitzgerald used commas and semicolons in such a way that, despite its great length, the sentence is grammatically sound. Length is no guarantee of a run-on sentence.

Common Causes of Run-Ons

We often write run-on sentences because we sense that the sentences involved are closely related, and dividing them with a period just doesn't seem right. We may also write them because the parts seem too short to need any division, such as in "She loves skiing but he doesn't." However, "She loves skiing" and "he doesn't" are both independent clauses, so they need to be divided by a comma and a coordinating conjunction—not just a coordinating conjunction by itself.

Another common cause of run-on sentences is mistaking adverbial conjunctions for coordinating conjunctions. For example if we were to write, "She loved skiing, however he didn't," we would have produced a comma splice. The correct sentence would be "She loved skiing; however, he didn't."

Fixing Run-On Sentences

Before you can fix a run-on sentence, you'll need to identify the problem. When you write, carefully look at each part of every sentence. Are the parts independent clauses, or are they dependent clauses or phrases? Remember, only independent clauses can stand on their own. This also means they have to stand on their own; they can't run together without correct punctuation.

Let's take a look at a few run-on sentences and their revisions:

1. Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer, however, I do have at least some hours the university will accept.
2. The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel they tend to be more susceptible to rust.
3. Some people were highly educated professionals, others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

Let's start with the first sentence. This is a comma-splice sentence. The adverbial conjunction *however* is being treated like a coordinating conjunction. There are two easy fixes to this problem. The first is to turn the comma before *however* into a period. If this feels like too hard of a stop between ideas, you can change the comma into a semicolon instead.

- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer. However, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.

- Most of the hours I've earned toward my associate's degree do not transfer; however, I do have at least some hours the University will accept.

The second sentence is a run-on as well. "The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel" and "they tend to be more susceptible to rust." are both independent clauses. The two clauses are very closely related, and the second clarifies the information provided in the first. The best solution is to insert a colon between the two clauses:

The opposite is true of stronger types of stainless steel: they tend to be more susceptible to rust.

What about the last example? Once again we have two independent clauses. The two clauses provide contrasting information. Adding a conjunction could help the reader move from one kind of information to another. However, you may want that sharp contrast. Here are two revision options:

- Some people were highly educated professionals, while others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.
- Some people were highly educated professionals. Others were from small villages in underdeveloped countries.

? Exercise 1

Identify the run-on sentences in the following paragraph:

I had the craziest dream the other night. My cousin Jacob and I were on the run from the law. Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic. So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop. But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

Answer

The first two sentences are grammatically sound. The next sentence, however, is not.

Apparently we were wizards and the law was cracking down on magic.

This sentence just needs a comma inserted before the word *and*: Apparently we were wizards**,** and the law was cracking down on magic.

Let's look at the next sentence:

So, we obviously had to go into hiding but I lost track of Jacob and then I got picked up by a cop.

This is also a run-on sentence. While *So* at the beginning of the sentence is technically fine, it's unnecessary, and many teachers dislike it as a transition word. There are three clauses in this run-on sentence, so there are a few different ways you could rework it:

- We obviously had to go into hiding**,** but I lost track of Jacob. After that, I got picked up by a cop.
- We obviously had to go into hiding. Unfortunately, I had lost track of Jacob and had gotten picked up by a cop.

Let's look at the final sentence:

But I was able to convince him that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

This sentence is technically okay, but the *but* at the start of the sentence is unnecessary, and it could be removed without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Additionally, it may be helpful to clarify who *he* is:

I was able to convince the cop that the government was corrupt and that he should take me to my escape boat.

Run-On Sentences vs. Comma Splices

In English, a clause is a group of words containing a subject and verb. A sentence is a clause that expresses a complete thought. This type of clause is known as an independent clause. Problems occur when independent clauses are joined together incorrectly. Study the following examples.

Independent Clauses	Incorrect Sentences	Problem
The students worked hard on the project. They deserved a high score.	The students worked hard on the project they deserved a high score.	**Run-on**
The students worked hard on the project. They deserved a high score.	The students worked hard on the project, they deserved a high score.	**Comma Splice**

Explanation: The first incorrect sentence is a **RUN-ON** sentence. The two independent clauses have been joined together without a connector or any punctuation marks. The second incorrect sentence is known as a **COMMA SPLICE**. Here, a comma has been incorrectly used to join the two independent clauses together. There are four ways to correct such errors.

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Example: She worked hard on the project, **so** they deserved a high score.

2. Use a semi-colon followed by a conjunctive adverb, such as: *consequently, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, meanwhile,* and *therefore*.

The formula is **semi-colon** + **conjunctive adverb** + **comma**.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**; consequently,** they deserved a high score.

3. Use a semi-colon without a connecting word.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**;** they deserved a high score.

4. Create two sentences by adding a period at the end of the first independent clause and capitalizing the first word of the second independent clause.

Example: The students worked hard on the project**. T**hey deserved a high score.

Sentence Fragments

Fragments are simply grammatically incomplete sentences—they are phrases and dependent clauses. We talked about phrases and clauses a bit in Section 12.2, "Word Order and Sentence Structure." These are grammatical structures that cannot stand on their own: They need to be connected to an independent clause to work in writing. So how can we tell the difference between a sentence and a sentence fragment? And how can we fix fragments when they already exist?

Common Causes of Fragments

Part of the reason we write in fragments is because we often speak that way. However, there is a difference between writing and speech, and it is important to write in complete sentences. Additionally, fragments often happen in writing because a fragment may already seem too long.

Non-finite verbs (gerunds, participles, and infinitives) can often trip people up as well. Since non-finite verbs don't act like verbs, we don't count them as verbs when we're deciding if we have a phrase or a clause. Let's look at a few examples of these:

- Running away from my mother.
- To ensure your safety and security.
- Beaten down since day one.

Even though all of the above have non-finite verbs, they're phrases, not clauses. In order for these to be clauses, they would need an additional verb that acts as a verb in the sentence.

Words like *since*, *when*, and *because* turn an independent clause into a dependent clause. For example "I was a little girl in 1995" is an independent clause, but "Because I was a little girl in 1995" is a dependent clause. This class of word includes the following:

after	although	as	as far as	as if	as long as	as soon as
as though	because	before	even if	even though	every time	if
in order that	since	so	so that	than	though	unless
until	when	whenever	where	whereas	wherever	while

Relative pronouns, such as *that* and *which*, do the same type of thing as those listed above.

Coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS) can also cause problems. If you start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction, make sure that it is followed a complete clause, not just a phrase!

As you're identifying fragments, keep in mind that command sentences are *not* fragments, despite not having a subject. Commands are the only grammatically correct sentences that lack a subject:

- Drop and give me fifty!
- Count how many times the word *fragrant* is used during commercial breaks.

In this case, the subject "you" is implied.

Fixing Sentence Fragments

Let’s take a look at a couple of examples:

1. Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week. And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.
2. The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful. The best ideas that they had heard in years.
3. She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Let’s look at the phrase “And made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product” in example one. It’s just that: a phrase. There is no subject in this phrase, so the easiest fix is to simply delete the period and combine the two statements:

Ivana appeared at the committee meeting last week and made a convincing presentation of her ideas about the new product.

Let’s look at example two. The phrase “the best ideas they had heard in years” is simply a phrase—there is no verb contained in the phrase. By adding “they were” to the beginning of this phrase, we have turned the fragment into an independent clause, which can now stand on its own:

The committee considered her ideas for a new marketing strategy quite powerful; they were the best ideas that they had heard in years.

What about example three? Let’s look at the clause “Which she eventually sent to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.” This is a dependent clause; the word *which* signals this fact. If we change “which she eventually” to “eventually, she,” we also turn the dependent clause into an independent clause.

She spent a full month evaluating his computer-based instructional materials. Eventually, she sent the evaluation to her supervisor with the strongest of recommendations.

Editing Fragments that Are Missing a Subject or a Verb

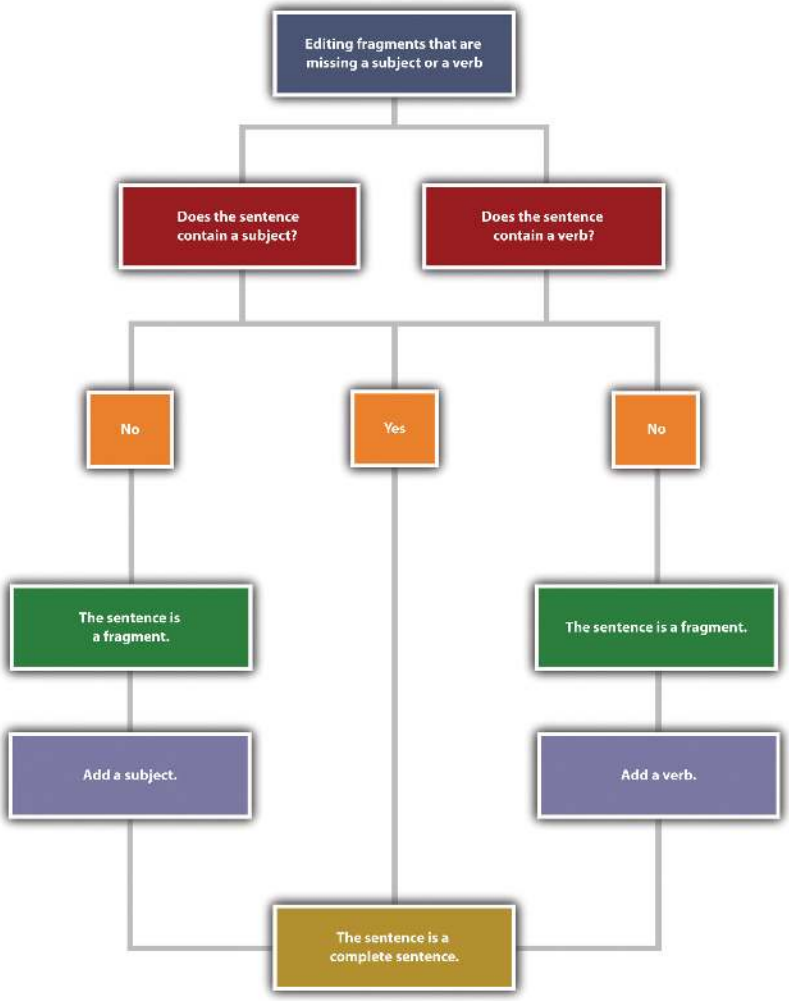


Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

Editing Fragments that Begin with a Gerund

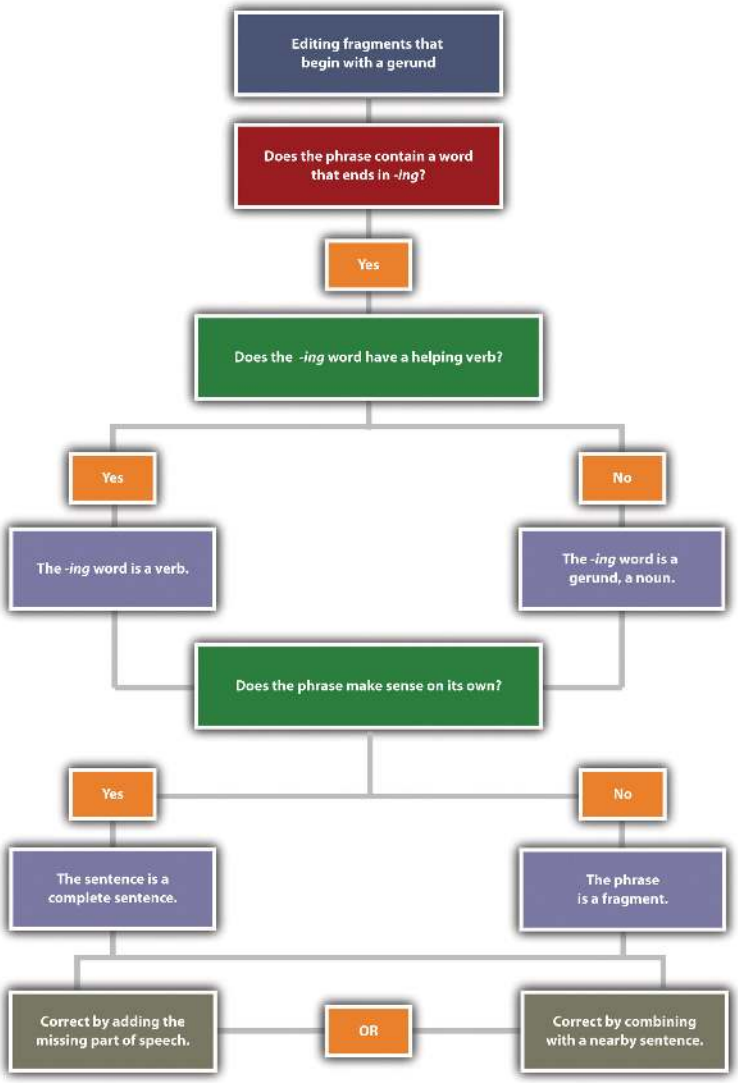


Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

Editing Fragments that Begin with a Prepositional Phrase

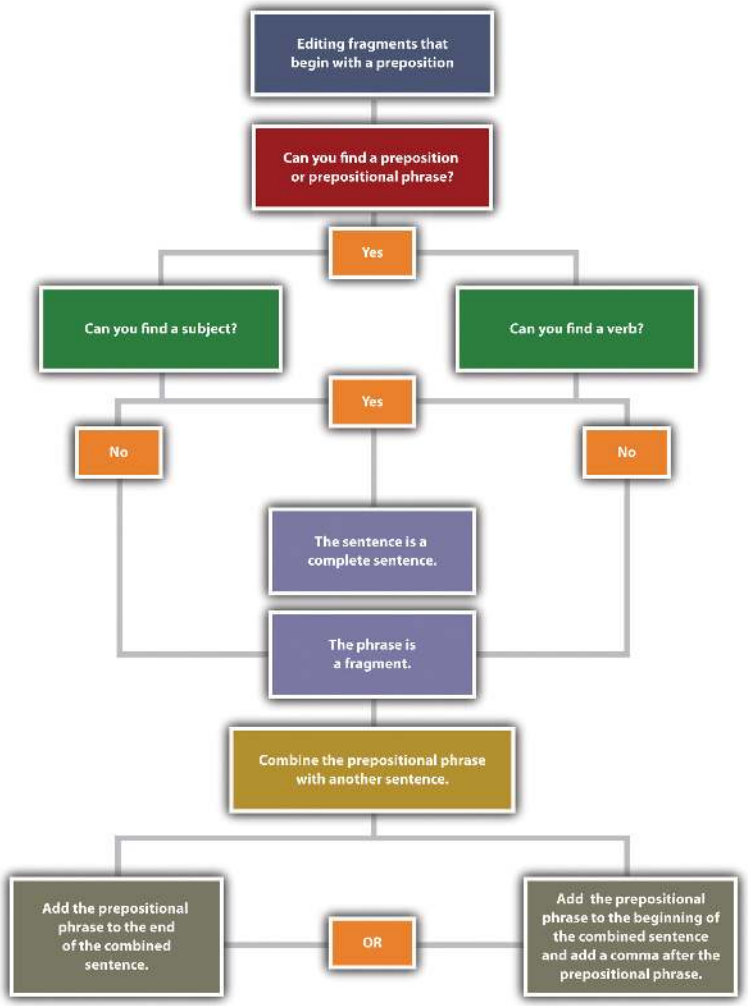


Figure: from "Guide to Writing"

? Exercise 2

Identify the fragments in the sentences below. Why are they fragments? What are some possible solutions?

1. The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.
2. Include several different sections in your proposal. For example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.
3. The research team has completely reorganized the workload. Making sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

Answer

Here are some possible revisions for the sentences. Remember, there are multiple solutions. Pay attention to the principles used to create the revised sentence.

In the fragment “Although, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical,” the subordinating conjunction *although* is being used as an adverbial conjunction in this sentence. There are two simple revision to resolve the fragment.

- Change *although* to be an adverbial conjunction: “The corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software. However, the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical.”
- Move the fragment to the beginning of the sentence and link it to the independent clause with a comma after it: “Although the more conservative executives of the firm are skeptical, the corporation wants to begin a new marketing push in educational software.”

The first sentence is a command; it is a correct sentence. The second sentence is a fragment, however. The simplest change is to switch the period before “for example” out for a colon. Colons can be followed by a phrase or dependent clause.

- Include several different sections in your proposal: for example, a discussion of your personnel and their qualifications, your expectations concerning the schedule of the project, and a cost breakdown.

The second sentence is a fragment. You can either change *making* to “they made” and have two sentences, or you can change *making* to “in order to make sure.” *In order to* is a subordinating conjunction, so it does not require a comma beforehand:

- The research team has completely reorganized the workload. They made sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.
- The research team has completely reorganized the workload in order to make sure that members work in areas of their own expertise and that no member is assigned proportionately too much work.

Correcting Sentence Fragments in Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses, also known as subordinate clauses, contain subjects and verbs. However, unlike independent clauses, they do not express complete thoughts. They are simply parts of sentences, or fragments. Consider the following examples:

Fragment	When we arrived at the restaurant.
Explanation	Although this fragment, or dependent clause has a subject (we) and a verb (arrived), it has no meaning for the reader. It needs to be joined to an independent clause for it to make sense.
Corrected	When we arrived at the restaurant, *our friends were already waiting for us.*

Fragment	Because she was excited about the wedding.
Explanation	Like the first example, this fragment, or dependent clause contains a subject (she) and a verb (was), but it makes no sense on its own. However, we can easily correct the problem by joining the fragment, to an independent clause, as above.
Corrected	Because she was excited about the wedding, *she couldn't sleep.*

? Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct. Then, rewrite the paragraph by correcting the sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931. _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point. _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" _____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. Because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

Answer

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 **run-on**. Written in 1931. **fragment**. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes **fragment**. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point **correct**. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia" **run-on**. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma **run-on**. Because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology,

and he believes in natural ways of living **fragment**. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there **correct**. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out **run-on**. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read **run-on**.

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10.20: Grammatical Parallelism

Parallel Structure

What exactly is parallel structure? It's simply the practice of using the same structures or forms multiple times: making sure the parts are parallel to each other. Parallel structure can be applied to a single sentence, a paragraph, or even multiple paragraphs. Compare the two following sentences:

- Yara loves running, to swim, and biking.
- Yara loves running, swimming, and biking.

Was the second sentence easier to comprehend than the first? The second sentence uses parallelism—all three verbs are gerunds, whereas in the first sentence two are gerunds and one is an infinitive. While the first sentence is technically correct, it's easy to trip up over the mismatching items. The application of parallelism improves writing style and readability, and it makes sentences easier to process.

Compare the following examples:

- Lacking parallelism: "She likes cooking, jogging, and *to read*."
  - Parallel: "She likes cooking, jogging, and reading."
  - Parallel: "She likes to cook, jog, and read."
- Lacking parallelism: "He likes to swim and *running*."
  - Parallel: "He likes to swim and to run."
  - Parallel: "He likes swimming and running."

Once again, the examples above combine gerunds and infinitives. To make them parallel, the sentences should be rewritten with just gerunds or just infinitives. Note that the first nonparallel example, while inelegantly worded, is grammatically correct: "cooking," "jogging," and "to read" are all grammatically valid conclusions to "She likes."

- Lacking parallelism: "The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **down the alley sprinted**."
- Grammatical but not employing parallelism: "The dog ran across the yard and jumped over the fence, and **down the alley he sprinted**."
- Parallel: "The dog ran across the yard, jumped over the fence, and **sprinted down the alley**."

The nonparallel example above is *not* grammatically correct: "down the alley sprinted" is not a grammatically valid conclusion to "The dog." The second example, which does not attempt to employ parallelism in its conclusion, is grammatically valid; "down the alley he sprinted" is an entirely separate clause.

Parallelism can also apply to names. If you're writing a research paper that includes references to several different authors, you should be consistent in your references. For example, if you talk about Jane Goodall and Henry Harlow, you should say "Goodall and Harlow," not "Jane and Harlow" or "Goodall and Henry." This is something that would carry on through your entire paper: you should use the same mode of address for every person you mention.

You can also apply parallelism across a passage:

Manuel painted eight paintings in the last week. Jennifer sculpted five statues in the last month. Zama wrote fifteen songs in the last two months.

Each of the sentences in the preceding paragraph has the same structure: Name + *-ed* verb + number of things + *in the* past time period. When using parallelism across multiple sentences, be sure that you're using it well. If you aren't careful, you can stray into being repetitive. Unfortunately, really the only way to test this is by re-reading the passage and seeing if it "feels right." While this test doesn't have any rules to it, it can often help.

? Exercise 1

Do of the following sentences correctly employ parallelism? If not, revise the sentences in the text frame below.

1. Kya is really good at writing poems and making pottery. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.
2. Don't forget to let the dog out or to feed the cats.
3. In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
4. Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he's doing and is watching the drivers around him.

Answer

No. While the both sentences are internally parallel, they are not parallel with each other. Here are two possible revisions to improve parallelism:

- Kya is really good at writing poems and making sculptures. Atswei is really good at singing and dancing.
- Kya is a good poet and sculptor. Atswei is a good singer and a good dancer.

Yes. This sentence is parallel. The two phrases “to let the dog out” and “to feed the cats” are both infinitives. No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:

- In this paper, we will reference the works of Dr. Ernest Walton and Sir John Cockcroft.
- In this paper, we will reference the works of Walton and Cockcroft.

No. While the sentence is grammatically correct, it is not parallel. The two following revisions are parallel versions of this sentence:

- Whenever he drives, Reza pays attention to what he’s doing and watches the drivers around him.
- Whenever he drives, Reza is paying attention to what he’s doing and watching the drivers around him.

Rhetoric and Parallelism

Parallelism can also involve repeated words or repeated phrases. These uses are part of “rhetoric” (a field that focuses on persuading readers) Here are a few examples of repetition:

- “**The inherent vice** of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; **the inherent virtue** of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” —Winston Churchill
- “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall **pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe** to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” —John F. Kennedy
- “And that government **of the people, by the people, for the people**, shall not perish from the earth.” —Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

When used this way, parallelism makes your writing or speaking much stronger. These repeated phrases seem to bind the work together and make it more powerful—and more inspiring. This use of parallelism can be especially useful in writing conclusions of academic papers or in persuasive writing.

? Exercise 2

Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Winston Churchill’s “Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat” speech, or Barack Obama’s inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, individually or as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether writers manipulate parallelism to create a variety of responses among their audiences.

Grammatical Parallelism

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. Parallelism should occur on both a structural and organizational level and on a sentence level.

At a sentence level, parallel structure can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. Joining two parallel items without the same grammatical structure can be very confusing to a reader. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions, such as "and" or "or."

Parallelism also creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Sometimes, however, faulty parallelism can really make the meaning unclear. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism

Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination*, *jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight*, *wearing a suit*). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism

Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen*, *talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lowering workers' wages**.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce*, *cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar at weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries

Exercise 4

Using a piece of your own writing, try to identify any faulty parallelism by first highlightling any coordinating conjunctions, particularly "and," "or," and "but." Then, check to see whether the items that are joined by the coordinating conjunction are of the same grammatical type. If not, revise the sentence to correct the faulty parallelism.

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as,* and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **a pool**.

Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

? Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using "than" or "as."

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is sometimes as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim’s opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either…or
- not only…but also
- neither…nor
- whether…or
- rather…than
- both…and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

? Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting, nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner, nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians, such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures (and repetition) to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable speech. Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, "I Have a Dream": http://www.mlkonline.net/dream.html.

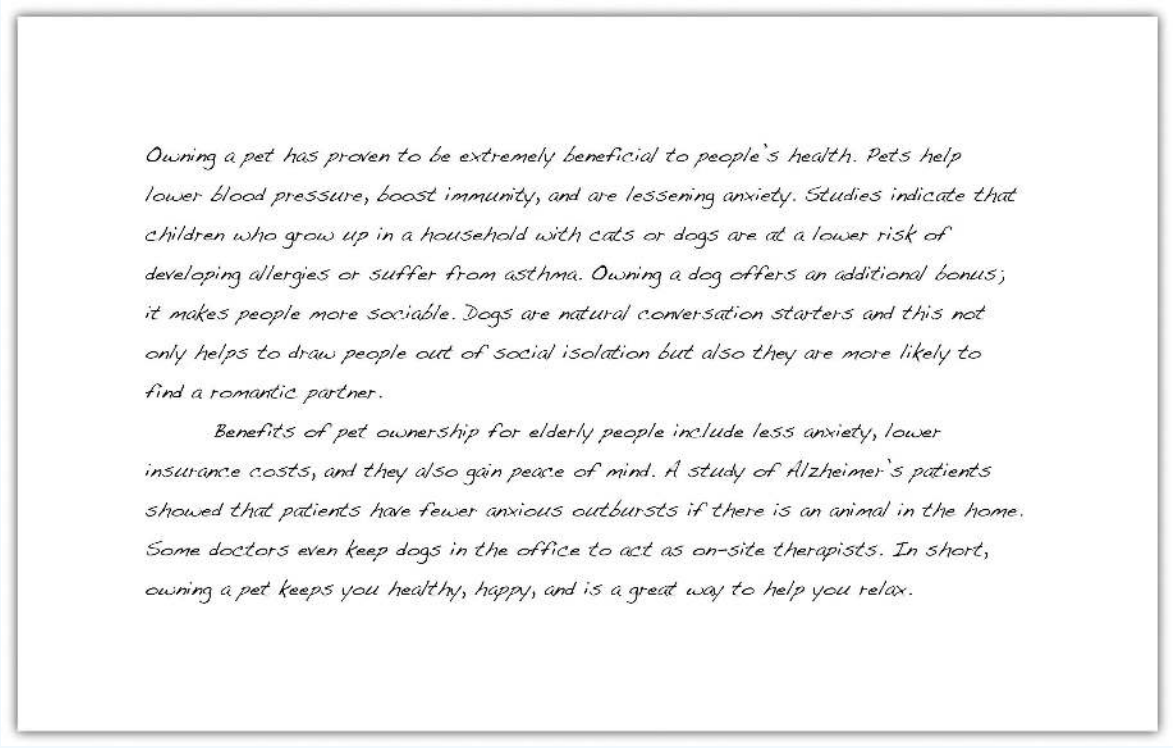
Proofreading Strategies for Parallelism

- Skim your paper, pausing at the words "and," "or," and “but.” Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel.
- If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel.

Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of "-ing" words beginning each item? Or do your hear a repeated rhythm? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel.

Exercise 7

Read through the following excerpt from Alex’s essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.



Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

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10.21: Standard American English Practice Exercises

Exercises

The following exercises may be especially useful for those who are English language learners or rarely speak in Standard American English.

? Creating Questions

Create questions from the following sentences.

a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.

b. Otto is waiting in the car for his boyfriend.

c. The article talks about conserving energy.

d. We need to reduce our needs.

e. Natalie is always complaining about her work

? Identifying Prepositional Phrases

Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.

a. Monica told us about her trip.

b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.

c. The panther climbed up the tree.

d. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.

e. We stayed awake until dawn.

? Adjective Order

Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the nouns.

a. eyes: black, mesmerizing

b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede

c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet

d. vacation: fun, skiing

e. movie: hilarious, independent

? Negative Sentences

Rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.

b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.

c. He breathes loudly at night.

d. He raps really well.

e. I communicate well with my partner

? Correct Double Negatives

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot, Danielle felt like she couldn't hardly breathe. Ain't nothing would get her out the door into that scratching heat. Then she remembered her dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much

> that Danielle didn't have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn't do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Danielle was sweating in the sun holding the leash. She couldn't not wait for winter to come.

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10.22: Extra Grammar Practice with Verbs

Exercises

? All Things Verb

Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, verb tense consistency, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

_____
__

2. John’s ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

_____
__

3. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

_____
__

4. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

_____
__

5. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

_____
__

6. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

_____
__

7. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

_____
__

8. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

_____
__

9. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

_____
__

10. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

_____
__

11. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

_____
__

12. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

_____
__

13. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone’s feelings.

_____
__

14. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

_____
__

15. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

_____
__

16. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

_____
__

17. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

_____
__

18. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

_____
__

19. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

20. The batter swinged at the ball several times but never hit it.

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10.23: Spelling

Spelling

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Even if using a spell check tool, writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest, or it can cause you to lose credibility as a writer. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

1) Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien -- follow rule
- receive, deceive -- exception

2) When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier -- follows rule
- cry + ed = cried -- follows rule

3) When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed -- follows rule

Note: Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day*, *lay*, *say*, *pay* = *daily*, *laid*, *said*, *paid*

4) When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *–able*, *–ence*, *–ing*, or *–ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

5) When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *–less*, *–ment*, or *–ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

6) For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *–s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

7) Add *–es* to words that end in *s*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes



Video 10.23.1



Video 10.23.1

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic (memory) devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or songs or practices that help you remember. For example, the the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wed-nes-day or *people* as pe-o-ple may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary -- either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a dictionary that will work for you.
4. **Use your computer's spell checker**. The spell check will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of <u>your</u> frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.

6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.

Review the common spelling rules explained on this page. Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules on this page again and again, as needed.

Tip:

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller--but equally important--details like spelling and punctuation. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see Chapter 7.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.

2. Copy the words (by hand) onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Commonly Misspelled Words		
a**c**ross	a**dd**ress	ans**w**er
arg**u**ment	a**thl**ete	begi**nn**ing
beha**vi**or	cal**e**nd**a**r	con**sci**ence
crow**ded**	def**in**ite	d**es**cribe
desp**er**ate	d**iffere**nt	dis**app**oint
disa**pp**rove	do**es**n't	eig**hth**
embar**rr**ass	envir**on**ment	exa**gg**erate
fam**ili**ar	fina**lly**	gover**nm**ent
gramm**a**r	hei**gh**t	**ill**egal
immedi**ate**ly	import**ant**	in**teg**ration
in**tell**igent	int**ere**st	int**er**fere
jew**el**ry	jud**gm**ent	knowle**d**ge
maint**ain**	math**e**matics	me**a**nt
ne**ce**ssary	nerv**ous**	o**cc**asion
opin**ion**	opt**i**mist	

Exercises

? Exercise 1: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 1

Identify and correct the ten misspelled words in the following paragraph.

It is hard to imagine that Joanne Rowling, better known as J.K. Rowling, was a struggleing writer once. The best-selling author of the *Harry Potter* fantasy serys had to go through serious hardship to get where she is now. Although she lovd books from a young age, her teenage years were quite unhappy due to her mother falling ill with multiple sclerosis. Her mother dyed ten years later, while Rowling was writeing her first book, which had a huge impact on her writing. While writing *Harry Potter*, Rowling got marryed, had a miscarryage, suffered from alleged domestic abuse, fell pregnant, and ended up separateing from her husband. Without a job and haveing to care for an infant, Rowling became clinically depressed and even contemplated suicide. Eventually she was forced to sign up for welfare benefits. Her big break only came after many rejections, when the daughter of the chairman of a publishing house read the first chapter of *Harry Potter* and immediatly wanted to read more. Even then, Rowling was advised to get a day job as there was no money in children books, but thanks to fans of her work she quickly rose to stardom.

Answer

It is hard to imagine that Joanne Rowling, better known as J.K. Rowling, was a struggling writer once. The best-selling author of the *Harry Potter* fantasy series had to go through serious hardship to get where she is now. Although she loved books from a young age, her teenage years were quite unhappy due to her mother falling ill with multiple sclerosis. Her mother died ten years later, while Rowling was writing her first book, which had a huge impact on her writing. While writing *Harry Potter*, Rowling got married, had a miscarriage, suffered from alleged domestic abuse, fell pregnant and ended up separating from her husband. Without a job and having to care for an infant, Rowling became clinically depressed and even contemplated suicide. Eventually she was forced to sign up for welfare benefits. Her big break only came after many rejections, when the daughter of the chairman of a publishing house read the first chapter of *Harry Potter* and immediately wanted to read more. Even then, Rowling was advised to get a day job as there was no money in children's books, but thanks to fans of her work she quickly rose to stardom.

? Exercise 2: Edit and Correct Misspelled Words 2

Identify and correct the commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island, directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the 16th century when it was founded by the Dutch, who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British. In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution, known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all. By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinien, the intagration into New York City should never have happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Answer

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island, directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginnings stretch back to the 16th century when it was founded by the Dutch, who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immediately after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are

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Writing at Work

In today's job market, writing emails has become a means by which many people find employment. Emails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless emails daily. If even the subject line of an email contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked, and someone else's email will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an email to an employer and run the spell check is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the email and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing and career centers, both of which may also be able to assist you.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: The Academic Research Process

11.1: Approaching a Research Paper Assignment
11.2: Where to Find Authoritative Sources
11.3: Getting Familiar with Academic Journal Articles
11.4: Searching for Journal Articles
11.5: Strategies for Each Phase of the Research Process

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11.1: Approaching a Research Paper Assignment

Media Alternative

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Before getting started on a research paper, spending some time with the prompt will help keep us from becoming overwhelmed. A research essay **prompt** is the instructor's description of the assignment. It will answer many of the questions we may have about the requirements, such as the following:

1. How many sources will we need?
2. What types of sources (see Section 6.5: Types of Sources)?
3. Do the sources need to be found somewhere specific, like the college library?
4. How long does the research essay need to be?
5. Is there a specific structure we are supposed to follow?



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The steps below will help us analyze the essay prompt to get a clear picture of what the finished paper should include.

- First, circle or highlight all of the most important verbs in the prompt. Verbs are action words that often communicate the most important tasks in the assignment, like *analyze*, *evaluate*, *describe*, and so on.
- Then, create a chart that lists each verb in its own row on the left and the rest of the sentence it occurs in on the right. This will contain the most important components of the assignment, so you can use it later to review your draft.
- Is one of these writing tasks more the focus of the essay than the others? For example, an assignment might ask you to summarize a problem but spend more of the essay describing a proposed solution. In that case, you could put a star next to the task of describing the solution.
- Underline or highlight any words or requirements you don't understand, and ask your professor to clarify.
- Summarize the research essay prompt aloud by telling a friend or classmate what your assignment is about and what the basic requirements are.

Chapter 6 will describe what authoritative sources are, where to find them, and how to choose them. However, you can find your instructor's specific approach in the assignment description, so keep their instructions in mind as you read other advice on the research process.

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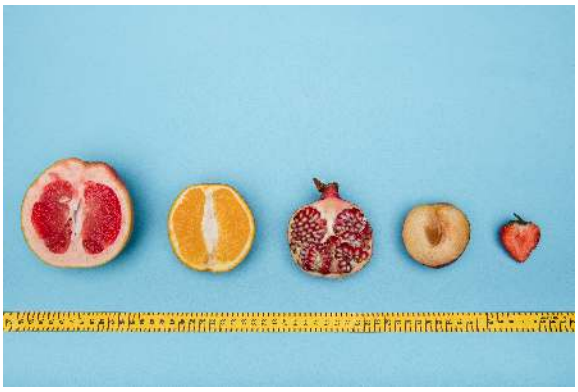
11.2: Where to Find Authoritative Sources

Media Alternative

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You probably know by now that if you cite Wikipedia as an authoritative source, the wrath of your professor shall be visited upon you. Why is it that even the most informative Wikipedia articles are still often considered illegitimate? And what are good sources to use? The table below summarizes types of secondary sources in four tiers. All sources have their legitimate uses, but the top-tier ones are preferable for citation.



Just as different fruits have different internal structures, different kinds of sources have different characteristics and uses. Photo by Deon Black on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Types of Sources

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	How to find them
1	Peer-reviewed academic publications	Rigorous research and analysis	Provide strong evidence for claims and references to other high-quality sources	Google Scholar, library catalogs, and academic article databases
2	Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources	Well researched and even-handed descriptions of an event or state of the world	Initial research on events or trends not yet analyzed in the academic literature; may reference important Tier 1 sources	Websites of relevant agencies, Google searches using (site: *.gov or site: *.org), academic article databases
3	Short pieces from newspapers or credible websites	Simple reporting of events, research findings, or policy changes	Often point to useful Tier 2 or Tier 1 sources, may provide a factoid or two not found anywhere else	Strategic Google searches or article databases including newspapers and magazines

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	How to find them
4	Agenda-driven or uncertain pieces	Mostly opinion, varying in thoughtfulness and credibility	May represent a particular position within a debate; more often provide keywords and clues about higher quality sources	Non-specific Google searches

Tier 1: Peer-reviewed academic publications

These are sources from the mainstream academic literature: books and scholarly articles. Academic books generally fall into three categories: (1) textbooks written with students in mind, (2) monographs, long documents which give an extended report on a particular research project, and (3) edited volumes in which each chapter is authored by different people. Scholarly articles appear in academic journals, which are published multiple times a year in order to share the latest research findings with scholars in the field. They're usually sponsored by some academic society. To get published, these articles and books had to earn favorable anonymous evaluations by qualified scholars. Who are the experts writing, reviewing, and editing these scholarly publications? Your professors. I describe this process below. Learning how to read and use these sources is a fundamental part of being a college student.

Tier 2: Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources

Some events and trends are too recent to appear in Tier 1 sources. Also, Tier 1 sources tend to be highly specific, and sometimes you need a more general perspective on a topic. Thus, Tier 2 sources can provide quality information that is more accessible to non-academics. There are three main categories. First, official reports from government agencies or major international institutions like the World Bank or the United Nations; these institutions generally have research departments staffed with qualified experts who seek to provide rigorous, even-handed information to decision-makers. Second, feature articles from major newspapers and magazines like *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The London Times*, or The Economist are based on original reporting by experienced journalists (not press releases) and are typically 1500+ words in length. Third, there are some great books from non-academic presses that cite their sources; they're often written by journalists. All three of these sources are generally well-researched descriptions of an event or state of the world, undertaken by credentialed experts who generally seek to be even-handed. It is still up to you to judge their credibility. Your instructors and campus librarians can advise you on which sources in this category have the most credibility.

Tier 3. Short pieces from periodicals or credible websites

A step below the well-developed reports and feature articles that make up Tier 2 are the short tidbits that one finds in newspapers and magazines or credible websites. How short is a short news article? Usually, they're just a couple paragraphs or less, and they're often reporting on just one thing: an event, an interesting research finding, or a policy change. They don't take extensive research and analysis to write, and many just summarize a press release written and distributed by an organization or business. They may describe things like corporate mergers, newly discovered diet-health links, or important school-funding legislation. You may want to cite Tier 3 sources in your paper if they provide an important factoid or two that isn't provided by a higher-tier piece, but if the Tier 3 article describes a particular study or academic expert, your best bet is to find the journal article or book it is reporting on and use that Tier 1 source instead. If the article mentions which journal the study was published in, you can go right to that journal through your library website. Sometimes you can find the original journal article by putting the scholar's name and some keywords into Google Scholar.

What counts as a credible website in this tier? You may need some guidance from instructors or librarians, but you can learn a lot by examining the person or organization providing the information (look for an "About" link). For example, if the organization is clearly agenda-driven or not up-front about its aims and/or funding sources, then it definitely isn't something you want to cite as a neutral authority. Also look for signs of expertise. A tidbit about a medical research finding written by someone with a science background carries more weight than the same topic written by a policy analyst. These sources are sometimes uncertain, which is all the more reason to follow the trail to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 source whenever possible.

Tier 4. Agenda-driven or pieces from unknown sources

This tier is essentially everything else, including Wikipedia.[4] These types of sources—especially Wikipedia—can be hugely helpful in identifying interesting topics, positions within a debate, keywords to search on, and, sometimes, higher-tier sources on the topic. They often play a critically important role in the early part of the research process, but they generally aren't (and shouldn't be) cited in the final paper. Throwing some keywords into Google and seeing what you get is a fine way to get started, but don't stop there. Start a list of the people, organizations, sources, and keywords that seem most relevant to your topic. For example, suppose you've been assigned a research paper about the impact of linen production and trade on the ancient world. A quick Google search reveals that (1) linen comes from the flax plant, (2) the scientific name for flax is *Linum usitatissimum*, (3) Egypt dominated linen production at the height of its empire, and (4) Alex J. Warden published a book about ancient linen trade in 1867. Similarly, you found some useful search terms to try instead of "ancient world" (antiquity, Egyptian empire, ancient Egypt, ancient Mediterranean) and some generalizations for linen (fabric, textiles, or weaving). Now you've got a lot to work with as you tap into the library catalog and academic article databases.

Practice Exercise **11.2.1**

Choose a topic that interests you and find one source related to it in each of the four tiers. What could you learn from each source? What are the limitations of each source?

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11.3: Getting Familiar with Academic Journal Articles

Media Alternative

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Most of the Tier 1 sources available are academic articles, also called scholarly articles, scholarly papers, journal articles, academic papers, or peer-reviewed articles. They all mean the same thing: a paper published in an academic periodical after being scrutinized anonymously and judged to be sound by other experts in the subfield. Their origin explains both their basic structure and the high esteem they have in the eyes of your professors.

Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most of your professors belong to some big, general one (such as the Modern Language Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, or the American Physical Society) and one or more smaller ones organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the International Association for Statistical Computing, or the Slavic and East European Folklore Association). There are also generalist organizations organized by region of the country or state, such as the Eastern Sociological Society or the Southern Management Association. Each of these associations exists to promote the exchange of research findings and collaboration in their disciplines. Towards this end, they organize conferences, sponsor working groups, and publish one or more academic journals. These journals are meant to both publicize and archive the most interesting and important findings of the field.

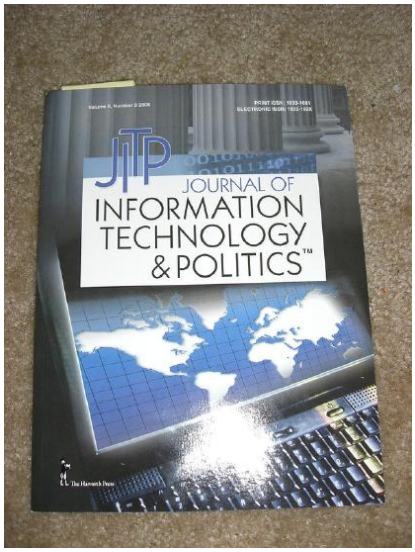


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Academic papers are essentially reports that scholars write to their peers—present and future—about what they've done in their research, what they've found, and why they think it's important. Thus, in a lot of fields they often have a structure reminiscent of the lab reports you've written for science classes:

1. **Abstract:** A one-paragraph summary of the article: its purpose, methods, findings, and significance.
2. **Introduction:** An overview of the key question or problem that the paper addresses, why it is important, and the key conclusion(s) (i.e., thesis or theses) of the paper.
3. **Literature review:** A synthesis of all the relevant prior research (the so-called "academic literature" on the subject) that explains why the paper makes an original and important contribution to the body of knowledge.
4. **Data and methods:** An explanation of what data or information the author(s) used and what they did with it.
5. **Results:** A full explanation of the key findings of the study.
6. **Conclusion/discussion:** Puts the key findings or insights from the paper into their broader context; explains why they matter.

Not all papers are so “sciencey.” For example, a historical or literary analysis doesn’t necessarily have a “data and methods” section; but they do explain and justify the research question, describe how the authors’ own points relate to those made in other relevant articles and books, develop the key insights yielded by the analysis, and conclude by explaining their significance. Some academic papers are review articles, in which the “data” are published papers and the “findings” are key insights, enduring lines of debate, and/or remaining unanswered questions.

Scholarly journals use a peer-review process to decide which articles merit publication. First, hopeful authors send their article manuscript to the journal editor, a role filled by some prominent scholar in the field. The editor reads over the manuscript and decides whether it seems worthy of peer review. If it’s outside the interests of the journal or is clearly inadequate, the editor will reject it outright. If it looks appropriate and sufficiently high quality, the editor will recruit a few other experts in the field to act as anonymous peer reviewers. The editor will send the manuscript (scrubbed of identifying information) to the reviewers who will read it closely and provide a thorough critique. Is the research question driving the paper timely and important? Does the paper sufficiently and accurately review all of the relevant prior research? Are the information sources believable and the research methods rigorous? Are the stated results fully justified by the findings? Is the significance of the research clear? Is it well written? Overall, does the paper add new, trustworthy, and important knowledge to the field? Reviewers send their comments to the editor who then decides whether to (1) reject the manuscript, (2) ask the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or (3) accept it for publication. Editors send the reviewers’ comments (again, with no identifying information) to authors along with their decisions. A manuscript that has been revised and resubmitted usually goes out for peer-review again; editors often try to get reviews from one or two first-round reviewers as well as a new reviewer. The whole process, from start to finish, can easily take a year, and it is often another year before the paper appears in print.



Highlighting is just one strategy for reading academic journal articles strategically.
Photo by Mitchell Luo on Unsplash under the Unsplash License.

Understanding the academic publication process and the structure of scholarly articles tells you a lot about how to find, read and use these sources:

1. **Find them quickly.** Instead of paging through mountains of dubious web content, go right to the relevant scholarly article databases in order to quickly find the highest quality sources.
2. **Use the abstracts.** Abstracts tell you immediately whether or not the article you’re holding is relevant or useful to the paper you’re assigned to write. You shouldn’t ever have the experience of reading the whole paper just to discover it’s not useful.
3. **Read strategically.** Knowing the anatomy of a scholarly article tells you what you should be reading for in each section. For example, you don’t necessarily need to understand every nuance of the literature review. You can just focus on why the authors claim that their own study is distinct from the ones that came before.
4. **Don’t sweat the technical stuff.** Not every social scientist understands the intricacies of log-linear modeling of quantitative survey data; however, the reviewers definitely do, and they found the analysis to be well constructed. Thus, you can accept the findings as legitimate and just focus on the passages that explain the findings and their significance in plainer language.
5. **Use one article to find others.** If you have one really good article that’s a few years old, you can use article databases to find newer articles that cited it in their own literature reviews. That immediately tells you which ones are on the same topic and offer newer findings. On the other hand, if your first source is very recent, the literature review section will describe the other papers in the same line of research. You can look them up directly.

Students sometimes grumble when they’re ordered to use scholarly articles in their research. It seems a lot easier to just Google some terms and find stuff that way. However, academic articles are the most efficient resource out there. They are vetted by experts and structured specifically to help readers zero in on the most important passages.

Practice Exercise 11.3.1

Enter a topic into a general subscription database that has both scholarly and non-scholarly sources (such as Academic Search Complete or Academic OneFile); browse the first few hits and classify each one as scholarly or not-scholarly. Look at the structure of the piece to make your determination.

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11.4: Searching for Journal Articles

Media Alternative

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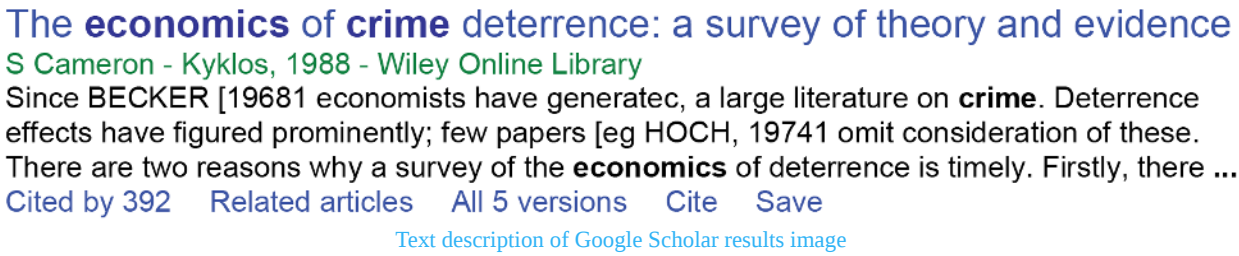
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Your campus library pays big money to subscribe to databases for Tier 1 articles. Some are general-purpose databases that include the most prominent journals across disciplines, such as Academic Search Premier (by EBSCO), Academic Search Complete (by EBSCO), Academic OneFile (by Cengage), General OneFile (by Cengage), ArticleFirst (by OCLC), and JSTOR (by ITHAKA). Some are specific to a particular discipline, such as PsycINFO (for psychology), CINAHL (for nursing), Environment Complete (for environmental science), Historical Abstracts (for history). Often they have the full-text of the articles right there for you to save or print. We won't go over particular databases here because every campus has different offerings. If you haven't already attended a workshop on using the resources provided by your library, you should. A one-hour workshop will save you many, many hours in the future. If there aren't any workshops, you can always seek advice from librarians and other library staff on the best databases for your topic. Many libraries also have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it's their job and they love it!—so don't be shy about asking.

An increasingly popular article database is Google Scholar. It looks like a regular Google search, and it aspires to include the vast majority of published scholarship. Google doesn't share a list of which journals they include or how Google Scholar works, which limits its utility for scholars. Also, because it's so wide-ranging, it can be harder to find the most appropriate sources. However, if you want to cast a wide net, it's a very useful tool.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. **Add your field** (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords.
   If you just put in "crime," for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like "crime French literature modern" will get you to relevant sources much faster.
2. **Don't ever pay for an article.**
   When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher's site that tells you that you can download the article for $20 or $30. Don't do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors' names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don't have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through inter-library loan.
3. **Use the "cited by" feature.**
   If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms "crime economics" yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called *Kyklos*:



Text description of Google Scholar results image

1988 is nearly 30 years ago; for a social-science paper you probably want more recent sources. You can see that, according to Google, this paper was cited by 392 other sources. You can click on that “Cited by 392” to see that list. You can even search within that list of 392 if you’re trying to narrow down the topic. For example, you could search on the term “cities” to see which of those 392 articles are most likely to be about the economic impact of crime on cities.

Practice Exercise 11.4.1

Choose a research topic, enter it into Google and then into Google Scholar and then into your library's biggest database search engine. Compare your results.

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11.5: Strategies for Each Phase of the Research Process

Media Alternative

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Finding good sources is a much more creative task than it seems on the face of it. It's an extended problem-solving exercise, an iterative cycle of questions and answers. Go ahead and use Wikipedia to get broadly informed if you want. It won't corrupt your brain. But use it, and all other sources, strategically. You should eventually arrive at a core set of Tier 1 sources that will enable you to make a well informed and thoughtful argument in support of your thesis. It's also a good sign when you find yourself deciding that some of the first sources you found are no longer relevant to your thesis; that likely means that you have revised and specified your thinking and are well on your way to constructing the kind of self-driven in-depth analysis that your professor is looking for.

Browsing for topics

Imagine you've been assigned a research paper that can focus on any topic relevant to the course. Imagine further that you don't have a clue about where to start and aren't entirely sure what counts as an appropriate topic in this discipline. A great approach is to find the top journals in the specific field of your course and browse through recent issues to see what people are publishing on. For example, when I assign an open-topic research paper in my Introduction to Sociology course, I suggest that students looking for a topic browse recent issues of *Social Problems* or *American Journal of Sociology* and find an article that looks interesting. They'll have a topic and—booyah!—their first source. An instructor of a class on kinesiology might recommend browsing *Human Movement Science*, the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, or *Perceptual and Motor Skills*.

Choosing keywords for your topic

When you have a topic and are looking for a set of sources, your biggest challenge is finding the right keywords. You'll obviously start with words and phrases from the assignment prompt, but you can't stop there. One strategy is to brainstorm keywords and keep track of what you have tried in a table like this one:

Coming up with Alternate Keywords

	Initial keywords	Alternate word or phrase	Alternate word or phrase	Related Terms
Example	iPhones and privacy	iPhone: Apple, smart phone, android	privacy: security, liberty, surveillance	data, data sharing, data harvesting, data economy, data privacy, data collection, digital footprint, informed consent, privacy policy
Fill-in your topic & keywords as you work				

As explained above, lower-tier sources (such as Wikipedia) or the top-tier sources you already have are great for identifying alternative keywords, and librarians and other library staff are also well-practiced at finding new approaches to try. Librarians can also point you to the best databases for your topic as well.

Returning to find more sources

As you assess your evidence and further develop your thesis through the writing process, you may need to seek additional sources. For example, imagine you're writing a paper about the added risks adolescents face when they have experienced their parents' divorce. As you synthesize the evidence about negative impacts, you begin to wonder if scholars have documented some positive impacts as well. You go back and search until you find a fairly recent article such as Ilana Sever, Joseph Gutmann, and Amnon Lazar, "Positive Consequences of Parental Divorce Among Israeli Young Adults", Marriage and Family Review 42, no. 4 (2007): 7-28. Thus you delve back into the literature to look for more articles, find some more concepts and keywords (such as "resiliency"), assess new evidence, and revise your thinking to account for these broader perspectives. Your instructor may have asked you to turn in a bibliography weeks before the final paper draft. You can check with your professor, but he or she is probably perfectly fine with you seeking additional sources as your thinking evolves. That's how scholars write.

Practice Exercise 11.5.1

You can download the keywords worksheet or copy the Google doc keywords worksheet to complete the exercise.

1. Start with a phrase to describe a topic that interests you. Use a keywords table like the one above to generate alternate and related search terms.
2. Do a search on your original phrase and list the three best sources you come up with. Then do five additional searches, each one for a different related term or combination of terms taken from your keywords table. For each search, copy the titles and links for any good sources you find.
3. Reflect on which phrases led you to the sources that most interest you. Did you learn anything about how your topic is most commonly described? Do any alternate keywords suggest new ways to focus your topic?

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